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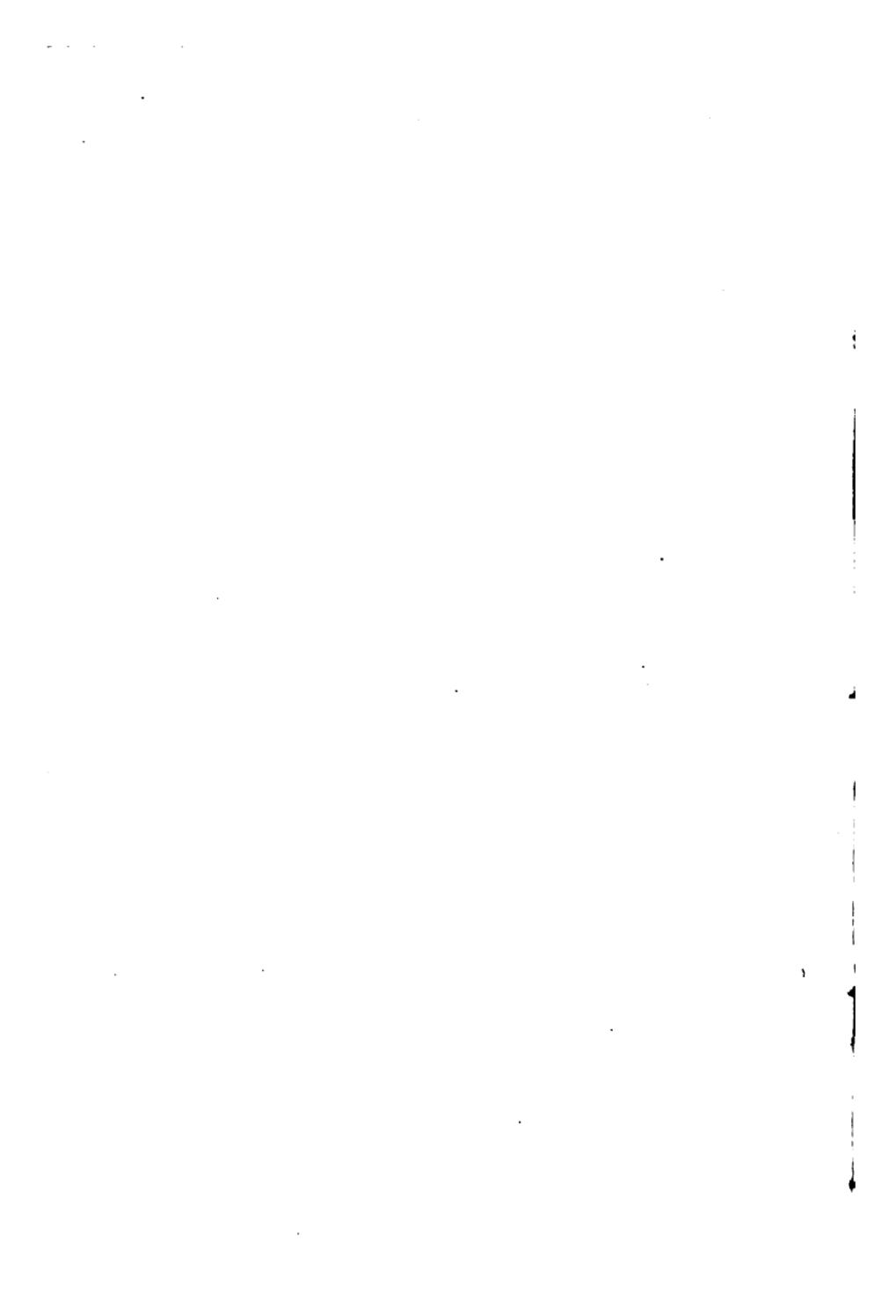
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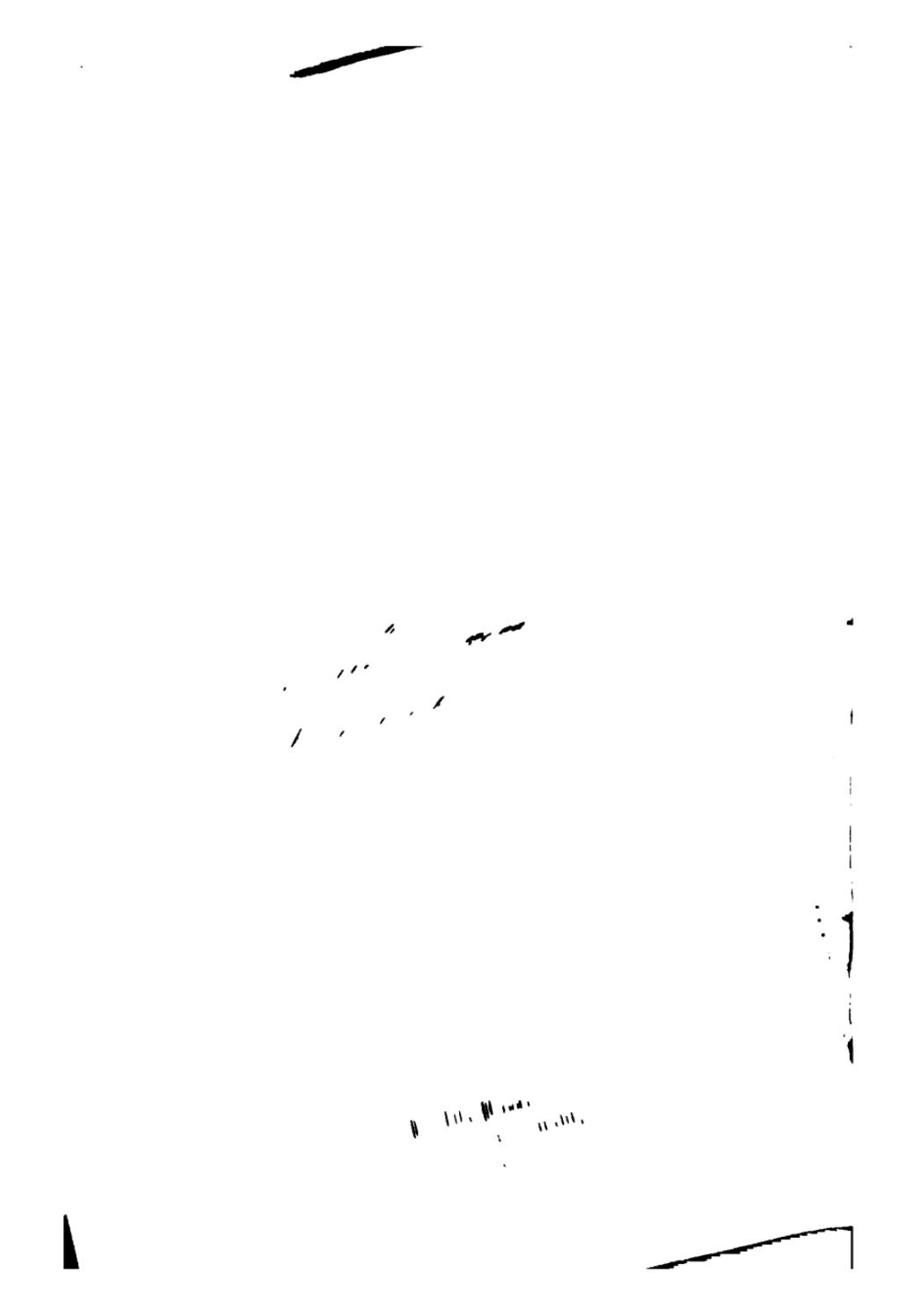
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Marvin Thompson

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1882



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A TALLAHASSEE GIRL.

CHAPTER I.

WITH LONGING EYES.

THE city of Tallahassee is not very old. Its site was chosen by the territorial commissioners in 1823. The Capitol, a stuccoed brick building fronting both east and west with a heavy-columned portico, was built some time after. In obedience to a social law of force in the South, a number of very wealthy and highly educated families drew together around this prospective urban centre; and, at the time of the breaking-out of the war of the Rebellion, a little city had spread itself over the crown and down the embowered slopes of Capitol Hill, overlooking a region at once the most fertile, the most picturesque, and the most salubrious

to be found south of the North Georgia mountains.

Large plantations were opened, and the generous soil was tilled by swarms of colored slaves. Cotton-warehouses sprang up at every street-corner; and the snowy fleece from the chocolate-colored fields yielded fabulous fortunes to planters and ~~merchants~~, to professional men, and to brokers and bankers. Indeed, no region in the world was ever more blessed with the fruits of well-directed and highly remunerative labor. ~~Tallahassee had~~ become the centre of a social system as unique as it was attractive. The homes of the city were mostly humble enough, in point of architectural pretensions; but there was about them an amplitude and stateliness characteristic of owners whose hospitality was known everywhere, and whose haughty exclusiveness was proverbial. In other words, these homes were open at all times, and for any number of days, weeks, and even months, to those who belonged to "good families," or who came bearing the written approval of any member of a "good family," and to no others. Here Prince Murat and his charming

wife had found congenial friends, and had made their little, unpretentious house the gathering-place for a coterie of brilliant and cultured men and women. In fact, there was a courtliness, an air of high breeding, nay, a something closely approaching the manners and influence of hereditary nobility, which enclosed the region known as the Tallahassee country, as with an atmosphere of its own, into which all the peculiarities of the highest social life in the slaveholding States had been condensed with an intensification corresponding to the compression.

When the war came, it did not reach Tallahassee. Atlanta, Nashville, Savannah, Augusta, Charleston, Richmond, each a social and commercial centre peculiarly Southern, fell in the way of armies, and lay at the mercy of a triumphant soldiery ; but the fair queen of Florida, beautiful, embowered, aristocratic Tallahassee, escaped such a fate. When the blare and thunder and crash of those four cataclysmal years had sunk into silence, she sat upon her high green hill, wrapped in her mantle of orange, fig, and live-oak trees, without a scar

or a hurt visible. Her occupation was gone, however; and she folded her hands and sat there quite silent, but unchanged. Her peasantry, ~~the negroes and the Crackers,~~ took possession of the vast plantations; and, under a system of tenantry ruinous to landlords and starving to laborers, began to enervate the famous chocolate fields by an exhausting system of tillage and utter neglect of fertilization.

Along with the new order of things came great political excitement, which in the black belt, as middle Florida was called, culminated in many a thrilling *coup* and lawless adventure in the field of partisan strife. The capital was the scene of the memorable "count" so disastrous to one party, so valuable to the other, and withal so disreputable to both.

Adventurers from all quarters of the United States, and especially from the East, hurried to Tallahassee with a view to riding into office upon the votes of the poor, ignorant, and kindly-natured freedmen.

Agriculture was almost wholly neglected by the educated inhabitants; and the depression of poverty was shown in their faces, their scant

clothing, and their dilapidated carriages. Their fences were broken, their houses needed paint. The galling dilemma was offered them of choosing between manual labor and seedy, thrifless poverty. They refused to choose. They hoped to find some royal way out of the trouble.

Of course a re-action came; and many men who lately had been planter-princes, with hundreds of slaves and broad estates at command, turned themselves to petty merchandising or dickering in real estate. Some sold their plantations out in parcels, and with the money received therefor began banking and curbstone broking in a small way. Others started orange nurseries; and yet others went away to the West, hoping to regain their fortunes on the plains of Texas or in the mines of Colorado. Very many, however, clung to the old order of things. In fact, it may be said that Tallahassee held itself, as a community, aloof from any change. It was the one city of the South which stood as a perfect monument of the lordly days when Cotton was king.

Lawrence Cauthorne went to Tallahassee as

the representative of an enterprising New York newspaper. He reached that dreamy city late in November, and immediately attracted attention on account of his striking personal appearance. He was tall, square-shouldered, heavy-limbed. His head was large, his hair and mustache flaxen white, just touched with yellow, his eyes and skin very dark. Quiet, almost silent, he began to go about the streets, with his hat drawn low over his forehead, and carrying in his left hand a heavy cane. He had taken comfortable apartments on the ground floor of the City Hotel,—the first two rooms to the left as you enter the main hall from the street veranda. This City Hotel is a picturesque old building,—a real ancient inn,—with long piazzas, and a peaked roof, broken up into queer little dormer windows. It is partly brick and partly frame, the latter very rickety, and runs in an ell shape along two broad streets, its main entrance facing the Capitol grounds. From its upper windows you may have a bird's-eye view of a wide stretch of surrounding country, beautifully rolling, forests and fields alternating,—a genuinely Piedmont-

ese landscape, the like of which cannot be found otherwhere in America. Here and there, half hidden in their unkempt orchards, the still stately but rapidly decaying old country mansions may be seen ; their weather-beaten chimneys and dilapidated porches pathetically suggesting the glory of the past.

Cauthorne had left some years behind him the romance period of his life. A man of thirty-eight, who has fought through the war of the Rebellion, who has experienced the terrors of Andersonville, who has been a war correspondent through the Franco-Prussian war, and has filled a like place in the late Russo-Turkish struggle, who has been often and desperately wounded, and who has recently published a quite successful and very brilliant novel, is not likely to lose much time in idle dreaming. Nevertheless, he found something in quiet, exclusive, sunshiny old Tallahassee and its bowery environs which brought back to him, as if on the wings of those balmy breezes, snatches of his old boyish sentiments. He wrote two or three little poems, so fresh and warm, so full of the tenderness and

strength of youth, that they were copied everywhere. Coming with no letters which could open the tightly-closed door of Tallahassee social life to him, Cauthorne found little to break the pleasing monotony of his daily round of lonely rambles and professional writing, until the coming-together of the Florida Legislature, which filled the old inn to overflowing with a chattering, drinking, rollicking, intriguing crowd of men, who turned the quiet of the place into a roar of voices. His especial duty led him at once into close companionship with some of the leaders of this body. But his interest in political affairs did not interfere with his study of the social problem constantly thrust before him. He would have given a great deal for some means of throwing himself, for a time, into the midst of certain staid and aristocratic families. He knew their houses; he even knew their names, and the acreage of their plantations; nay, he had possessed himself of their *antebellum* history, their goings and comings, their princely extravagances, and profuse hospitalities. And now he desired nothing so much as an opportunity to study

this present transition phase of the most ultra and most cultured circle of old Southern families. What a charming novel he could make out of such materials as the study would furnish !

Late one afternoon, as he sat in a roomy chair, leaning easily back against the brick wall of the inn, under the overhanging roof of the colonnade, a carriage driven by a well-dressed colored man rolled slowly past. The top of the vehicle was thrown back, so that he had a good view of the inmates,—a gray-haired, white-bearded, slender old gentleman ; a rather stout but prepossessing woman, who, by her face and a general likeness, was evidently the gentleman's sister ; and a tall, beautiful girl, no doubt his daughter. Something almost pathetic in the threadbare cleanliness of the man's attire, the faded cushions and curtains of the carriage, and the tattered trappings of the horses, contrasted oddly with the tasteful simpleness and newness of the girl's clothes, which, although made of cheap materials, were certainly in the very latest and most becoming fashion, as to shape and trimmings.

Cauthorne turned to the hotel-clerk, who chanced to be standing near, and who knew all about everybody in Tallahassee. "Who are they, Philips?" he inquired.

"That is Judge La Rue's family carriage, sir," replied Philips.

"I asked you about the persons in the carriage, and not about the ownership of the vehicle," dryly replied Cauthorne.

"Oh, yes, sir! beg pardon, sir: that is Judge La Rue and his family, sir."

"Where do they live?"

"At the north end of town, sir,—the old place in the grove where the Thomasville road comes in. A fine old place, sir, but going down: needs repairs."

"I have noticed that place," said Cauthorne. "It is a large house, far back in a tangled woody enclosure, with a rotten board fence around it."

"That's it, sir; and it *was* a place once to do one's eyes good. Judge La Rue used to live like a lord. He had his hundreds of negroes, and a half-dozen plantations. He used to spend his fifty thousand summering in the

North every year. But his day is over. Takes his best licks to keep soul and body together now."

Cauthorne's eyes followed the slowly trundling carriage until it passed from sight around a corner among some giant live-oaks ; then—

"She must have been young in the war-time," he said.

"The young lady, do you mean ?" demanded Philips.

"Yes."

"Oh ! she was a baby, you might say, a little toddling thing, when I volunteered. I remember seeing her in her nurse's arms. She's handsome, don't you think ?"

Cauthorne's sense of propriety revolted at this point. He could not afford to discuss the young lady's personal appearance with the inn-clerk. So he rose, and went for a stroll in the upper streets of the city.

As he passed along the clean sidewalks, beneath the thick arch of the trees which line those broad, beautiful avenues, a number of carriages, not unlike the one we have described, went by. He glanced into each one to see if

the tall girl was there. He very much wished to look at her again.

It easily fitted his mood to take the La Rue grounds within the circuit of his walk, and he was doubly repaid for his extended tramp by meeting the carriage at the rickety entrance-gate. Miss La Rue was not merely beautiful : she was lovely, she was sweet-faced and tender-eyed, healthy, a girl just going into strong young-womanhood. Cauthorne with one swift glance fixed her face and form forever in his memory. It was his strongest habit, this storing away for future use the forms, faces, and dress of such striking persons as chance threw in his way. But Miss La Rue made more than a passing impression on his mind. She seemed to him a type of a most interesting phase of Southern life ; and this impression grew apace as the days went by. He saw her frequently, sometimes walking, sometimes riding a very round and evidently very old pony, sometimes at the Methodist church on Sundays, always well dressed, always bright and sweet, always more interesting than before. One morning he saw her standing in the gar-

den at La Rue place, beside a huge banana-stalk. She had red flowers in her black hair, and at her throat. Her dark face and gentle gray eyes were turned suddenly upon him. He felt a thrill go through him. To his amazement she inclined her head, recognizing him with a smile and a movement of the lips. He lifted his hat, and bowed, half pausing where he was. Instantly a change flashed into the girl's face. She blushed in confusion, and turned away. Cauthorne walked on. The next moment he did a most unjustifiable thing ; but it must be said in mitigation of his offence, that he did it involuntarily in the heat of sudden emotion. He turned and looked back, just in time to see Miss La Rue bringing a pair of eye-glasses to bear upon him. These she let fall instantly, and almost ran out of the garden.

Cauthorne understood the situation at once. Miss La Rue was near-sighted ; and at first, not having on her glasses, had mistaken him for an acquaintance. A very natural blunder, and a harmless one. But if he had known, that, on account of the whiteness of his hair and

mustache, she had thought him a very old friend of her father, he might not have laughed so complacently as he pursued his walk.

After this some days passed before he again saw the young lady; but it was no fault of his that he did not meet her several times. In fact, he tried very hard. Not that he dreamed of any tender passion likely to be fanned to flame by further exchange of glances; but she was a revelation to him, or rather she seemed capable of becoming one. As for possible love-making, it did not enter his thoughts. His calculations were all based on the somewhat sordid premises of literary utility. In other words, he thought he should like to put Miss La Rue into his novel. But how was he ever to know her? How could the barrier be broken down?

It was Cauthorne's way to brood over a question until some answer was found; but in the present instance there seemed no probability that any amount of brooding or philosophizing would serve his turn; for what is more unassailable than the social laws of a small, isolated, conservative city?

However, notwithstanding the great likelihood of his never being able even to speak to her, he almost doggedly sought in every direction for means of approaching her. One day he made sure he should at least succeed in rendering her a service which would entitle him to some pleasant consideration. He met her pony in a road just out of town, leisurely making its way homeward, with a lady's saddle empty on its back. He took the bridle, and led the docile creature back along the way it had come, until he found Miss La Rue just emerging from a little wood, where she had been gathering some fringes of Spanish moss, which she bore in her hands.

"He was running away from you, I believe," he said, bowing gravely, and offering her the reins of the bridle.

"Thank you, sir," she said. He was not sure that she so much as glanced at him. He fancied, however, that her checks flushed warmly. There was no room for another word. She led the pony straightway to a bank by the wayside, whence she mounted, and rode homeward.

Cauthorne could not resist the temptation to gaze after the gracefully swaying form of the girl, as the pony cantered off. She was very pleasingly dressed; and there was a freshness, so to speak, in her outline, like the freshness of a young rose-tree. A fragrance seemed to linger in the air round about where she had stood. Cauthorne was vexed. He could not brook this delay, this ever-present smack of defeat. It was a strong fence, but the pasture was incomparably tender and tempting. Could he ever climb over?

CHAPTER II.

A TALLAHASSEE GENTLEMAN.

CAUTHORNE was invited, in acknowledgment of his importance as an *attaché* of a great newspaper of New York, to attend an evening session of a select informal caucus held by certain white members of the Florida Senate in the parlors of the inn. It was there that he was formally introduced, in a business way, to Mr. Arthur Vance, son of an ex-governor of the State. This young man was a tall, sallow, slender, albeit rather handsome fellow, near Cauthorne's age. He was a leader in State politics among the younger class of politicians, but inclined to a certain liberality in his views not quite tasteful to a few of the older heads. He had been a gallant soldier on the Southern side of the war, and, though tinctured somewhat with the too haughty spirit

of his ancestry, was scrupulously polite and gentle in his manners. He had snapped off the thread of his education at Heidelberg, when the war broke out, to hasten home, and do battle for the "peculiar institution" and the doctrines of his section. He served under Stonewall Jackson, receiving many wounds, honorable mention, promotion, and all the best rewards of a brave and intrepid soldier. It is not strange that Cauthorne was favorably impressed with the Southerner's courteous suavity and sincerity of manner; nor is it to be wondered at that it chafed him sorely to feel that this very courtesy and suavity guarded the portal to intimate friendship, or even general social intercourse, as by the interposition of a polished coat-of-mail. It was a novel experience, this feeling himself shut out of every social avenue. Not only were the homes barred against him, but the bosoms of even the men whom he met every day. And yet he could not complain of any unfair treatment. He was ready to admit that he had no right to expect any thing better than mere civility from these people, to whom at best he was merely

a newspaper emissary, who might be expected to exaggerate their faults, and scarcely notice their virtues, as correspondents are so apt to do.

Cauthorne made a study of Vance, rightly taking him as an excellent example of the younger Southern men of education and social mark left over from the war; a class of men a little inclined to give an insult on slight provocation, and wholly disinclined to receive one without fighting; but true as steel to a friend, punctilious in matters conventional, and beautifully tender and courtly in their intercourse with women,—a class, to say the truth, with as few faults and as high qualities as are the birthright of any other in the world.

During the course of the caucus it became necessary for Cauthorne and Vance to quite frequently interchange words; and it chanced that they invariably agreed upon matters of local State policy, whilst radically differing in their views upon national questions. At one time Vance said,—

“I think this question of the negro and his future depends almost wholly upon the sort of

education he is to receive. At present it will not do to pass the government of the State and its counties into his hands. He cannot read or write; he knows not the first rule of economy; he is, in fact, ineligible to rule even his own cabin. Of course I admit his right to vote and to hold office, but"—

"Well, I don't admit any thing of the sort," growlingly interrupted a square-mouthed, elderly man, with a dark cigar clamped in his teeth. "Whenever you admit so much as that, away go all the hopes of the South."

"No, you are wrong," replied Vance. "My theory is this: keep the negroes out of office until you have educated them. Build up schools for their children, encourage political study among them, and the next generation will show more fitness for public trust. What do you think, sir?" turning to Cauthorne, who had silently stood near.

"The negroes seem to vastly outnumber you here: how will you keep them out of office while their education is progressing?" Cauthorne asked.

"There are thousands of ways," suggested

the square-mouthed man. "They're mighty timid creatures."

"The question is a difficult one, I admit," said Vance, addressing Cauthorne, and giving no notice to the other. "I have puzzled my mind a good deal with it of late. The negro must be educated. That is fundamental. He must be absorbed, lost by education until he is no longer a negro, until he is not even a separate element in politics. I take it that the war has made us a nation, and it remains for us to make ourselves a people as well."

At this point some question was put to the body of the caucus, and the thread of the talk was broken. Soon after the meeting came to an end. Cauthorne did not go immediately to his room, but lighted a cigar, and walked a while on the long veranda. Vance had impressed him deeply and somewhat strangely, with his dark, swarthy, magnetic face, his peculiarly dignified manners, his voice, his sincerity, and, most of all, with his advanced political notions as compared with the current drift of Southern doctrines. There can be no doubt that a reflection from the grand old days of

slavery had helped to accentuate and emphasize Vance's characteristics in Cauthorne's eyes. No strong imagination can fail to be affected by such a reflex, when placed in a focus of past glory like Tallahassee.

Cauthorne, walking there in the balmy night air, with the moon's rays pouring slantwise upon him from a point above the roof of the Capitol building, tried to conjure up the old time, when all these black folk who now sauntered and shambled to and fro in the streets and alleys, or snoozed and nodded in the cabins, were slaves, mere cattle, to be ordered here and there, to be bought and sold. He thought how gay the winters must have been in Tallahassee when the Northern friends of these lordlike slaveholders came down to bask in the balmy Floridian weather, and to drink the wine and feast on the viands of those homes, famous for unequalled hospitality. Yonder stands an old dilapidated mansion, whose windows are curtainless and shutterless, whose chimeys are crumbling, whose roof is battered, whose stuccoed walls are sadly colored and defaced. A few years ago, say twenty, that

was a home where luxury reigned, and where distinguished men and women met in a way to charm the fancy of a poet or a painter. Men whose fame was world-wide came to that house,—politicians, artists, philosophers, novelists, actors. And the dignified youths and stately maidens went riding, driving, and walking, among the beautiful groves, or in happy companies sought Lake Jackson, or Lake Bradford, for a sail or a row on those silvery waters.

The question arose in Cauthorne's mind, how Mr. Arthur Vance, remembering the old time, and experiencing the new, with a full knowledge of all that lay between, could utter sentiments so liberal, so antagonistic to the whole spirit of his fathers. Not many men of the South, not another in Tallahassee, born and reared a Southerner, had at that time dared to go so far. He might safely be taken as the hero of a novel which should have for its purpose the portraying of Southern social life in this transition period.

And so it will be seen how it chanced that at last Cauthorne's fancy wove the web of a romance whose central figures were Arthur

Vance and Lucie La Rue. But as a novelist, he was far too practical to depend much upon his fancy. The bricks of genius are not made without straw ; but how in this case could the straw be gathered ? Cauthorne always came round to the same point, where he stood with his eyes fixed upon the door opening upon the social life of Tallahassee : and he always stopped there ; for upon that door was written, "No admittance without the password."

He often met Arthur Vance in the street, where they bowed, and passed each other by ; and his eyes were now and then blessed with seeing Miss La Rue at church or in her father's carriage : but the days might have been months and the weeks years without bringing him any nearer to them. Meantime he was absorbing the local spirit, and fastening in his memory forever the dreamy coloring of those sunny, breezy, perfumed landscapes, those prematurely old houses, and all the accidents and eccentricities of the climate and people as he might see them. He wrote chapter after chapter of his novel, infusing into them a rare freshness and a unique coloring ; but it was a con-

stant sting to his pride, and an actual pang to his artistic consciousness, whenever he thought how little he was allowed to know of the social and inner lives of the persons he had chosen as models for his leading characters. Some painters make up their compositions from the pictures of others ; but the insincerity of the thing must be a very great load to them.

So the time slipped by into midwinter, and on toward the beginning of a very early Floridian spring. The well-kept Capitol grounds were snowy with tall lilies, and fleecy with the sprays of the bridal-wreath shrubs. The live-oaks put forth their tassels, and the dusky fig-orchards took on a tinge of tender green. The winds from the Gulf had in them the sweetest tropical languors.

Cauthorne's mission seemed near its end. He was beginning to count the days as they led him to the time for his northward flight. He could not have the excuse of ill health with which to urge a stay after the adjournment of the legislature, which would be early in March. He never had been so strong physically, or so

energetic mentally. He had heard much of the enervating influence of the Floridian climate, but he felt in himself the opposite effect. Life seemed to have caught some new and valuable element from the golden sunlight, the rippling breezes, and the mingled perfumes. He tried to analyze his condition, but as often wandered away from the effort to think of Lucie La Rue.

CHAPTER III.

A TALLAHASSEE GIRL.

THE village of Thomasville, the county-seat of Thomas County, Ga., lies white and clean, half-hidden in its orchards of peach and pear trees, right in the heart of what appears to be a limitless pine wood, but what is in reality the extreme southern fringe of that wood, where it breaks up into the brown, fertile billows of the Tallahassee country. A road leading from Thomasville to the Floridian capital, and known as the Tallahassee road, lapses away like a snowy current, so white is the sand and so wavering the sunlight reflected from it, into the pine forest first, and next into the oak-clad hills beyond the Florida line.

There is a really fine hotel in Thomasville,—a large, well-appointed brick structure, with modern improvements. It overtops the sur-

rounding buildings, so that one standing on its iron balconies can look away beyond the clustered town-houses to those of the country, as they nestle in their embowering orchards of Le Conte pear-trees.

On either side of the principal street of the town may be seen, here and there, pretty flower-gardens and clumps of Japan-plum bushes. A few orange-trees, some gnarled fig-trees, tall oaks, and spreading umbrella-trees shade the sandy lawns in front of the houses.

Thomasville is a resort for invalids,—a winter resort for consumptives, and a summer resort for persons ill of rheumatism or general debility. Its air is singularly pure and bracing, always bearing a smell of fresh turpentine, that healing balsam of the pines, and always touched with the sharpness of the sea. Many persons going South by way of Montgomery find it convenient and pleasant to stop off for a day or two of rest at this charming Georgian village; and it occasionally happens that some one, desirous of turning aside from that great stream of excursionists, tourists, health-seekers, pleasure-seekers, and orange-maniacs, which

pours through Live Oak and Lake City on to Jacksonville and up the St. Johns, is led to accept the offer of a day's ride in a hack from Thomasville to Tallahassee. Whoever does this, does it with misgivings; but he never regrets it. Without doubt it is the most delightful little journey to be had in the South.

Herman Willard—a young artist, wealthy, happy, in love with his profession, and confident of success whenever he should get ready to try for it, but at present not willing to try very hard—was in Thomasville when February was nearly ended. Here he was informed that the stage or hack route to Tallahassee was but thirty-five miles, whilst the way by rail, going down to Live Oak, and doubling back to the first-named place, would be a whole night's journey, with a very disagreeable change of cars. So he arranged to go in the hack, a sort of degenerate stage-coach, drawn by two horses and manned by a stalwart negro. This vehicle would set out on the following morning, so he found an afternoon of golden weather at his disposal. He

resolved to make some sketches. It was while he stood on the sidewalk, rapidly pencilling the outlines of a low, broad-roofed cottage sunk deep among its trees, that a trivial thing happened which he remembered with distinctness a year afterwards, and will so remember to his dying hour, whenever that may come.

Two slender boys, students of the military academy hard by, stopped to look over his shoulders, as rude boys will. On the opposite sidewalk two ladies were passing, attended by a man on crutches. Of the former, one was an elderly woman; the other a girl just rounding into maturity, she might be twenty, tall, slender, dark, splendidly beautiful. The man, middle-aged, and of ordinary physique, had lost a leg.

"Who is that pretty girl, Tom?" said one of the boys to the other, in a low tone.

The artist looked up; and, as his eyes met those of the young lady, he fairly started, so surprised was he with her wonderful loveliness.

"That's the Tallahassee girl," responded the boy addressed as Tom.

It seems that just then there was a little

song, locally very popular, called "The Tallahassee Girl." Everybody in Thomasville was singing it. The music was of that happy, simple sort, which goes right to the popular sympathies.

One of the boys sang a stanza in a low, sweet, half-childish voice, as the two sauntered on. The words,—

"Oh! the Tallahassee girl is a charmer:
She sings like a mocking-bird in May,"—

with the snatch of melody in which they were set adrift, made a lodgement in Willard's fancy. Of course the song had no connection with the young lady just passing, or with any other. It was as impersonal as any idle song could be. But the young man sent several swift glances after the lissome figure; and those two verses of the ditty got tangled in the convolutions of his brain, and staid there. The receptivity of youth is as unreliable as it often is sensitive. To-day an impression is easily made: to-morrow every thing slips off the surface, leaving no trace. At one moment a tender voice and smiling lips will thrill every chord: the next, all

beauty goes for nought as against the dog and gun, or the rod and reel. An indistinct dream in which some angel-like face floated will make a whole day sweet; and anon the visions that remain distinctest after sleep will be those of grossest worldly ambition.

Just now Willard chanced to be in the mood for nursing gentle sentiments. The young lady left her photograph in his memory, and the air he breathed had in it for hours afterwards the sweetness of heliotrope.

As he stood there with his sketch-book in his left hand, the pencil in his right, as if arrested midway of a stroke, his head turned so that his face looked over his right shoulder, his slender, almost slight, figure firmly erect, he would himself have been a fine study for an artist.

All the rest of the afternoon, and throughout the evening, he was beset with such fancies as frame young faces in rose-mists, and build the airy castles of love-dreams.

Ah, this Southern climate, this fervent daytime, this cool, fragrant night-time, this balmy air, this burden of the birds and the flowers!

Surely Love walks here, with his quiver and his bow.

Ranged around a circular gallery in the hotel, and next to the supper-room, a silver band dis-coursed music during the repast. To Willard it seemed beautifully significant that this or-chestra marched him to the table on the melody of "The Tallahassee Girl." It was, indeed, a true touch of the place and the time, deeply suggestive of the half-rude, half-cultured condi-tion of society in a village where the old South was rapidly giving place to the new. Nothing so certainly registers the changes of public feeling as the giving-up of the old sort of songs, and the taking-up of a new sort. Geor-gia was the first Southern State to throw aside "Dixie," and take up the later-day ballads: it was also the first Southern State to trade shot-guns for schoolhouses. That is to say, that, while other States were still shooting men down to the level of their ideas, Georgia had begun to educate them up to hers. She had quickly discerned that true statesmanship in any party, Democratic or Republican, is grounded in the educating of the masses, and not in leading

their ignorance by appeals to their prejudices on one hand, or by whelming them with brute force on the other. She had begun to date her history from the close of the war, forgetting that Hamilton and Jefferson ever quarrelled, little heeding Jackson and Calhoun, but accepting the national promise in place of the State-rights theory; burying the lost cause, and planting above it the flag of the Union. No such reflections as these conditions might suggest came into Willard's mind. He hated politics. Beauty and pleasure in the lightest and least didactic form filled the whole field of his vision. He was nothing if not, in the latest sense, an æsthetæ.

That night a tall, dark girl, whose gray eyes were full of the wonder of a new passion, strayed back and forth through his dreams. Infinite distances of tropical landscape opened before him, unknown perfumes floated around him, and the breeze from distant gardens of bloom wafted to his ears again and again two or three turns of a sweet, simple tune.

When he awoke the sunlight was flooding his room, and the driver of the so-called stage

was plaintively blowing his bugle in warning that he soon would be ready to go.

Willard leaped from his bed, and, while he was hastily but scrupulously making his toilet, hummed the latest and most popular Thomasville air.

CHAPTER IV.

A SAND-LILY.

WILLARD, with the distinct impression in his mind that the day's journey would be a lonely one, filled his case with cigars, and his pockets with sketching-materials. He climbed into the coach; the driver gave a long, tremulous blast on his horn, whirled his whip with a sharp snap, and so the start was made. They were trundled eastward in a clean, broad street, whence they turned southward, and approached a well-kept house. The young man's heart jumped into his throat as if in fierce despite of all his polished self-control; for there at the lawn gate stood the girl and the crippled man; ready for travel. Evidently they had just said good-by to the middle-aged woman, who formed the least notable angle of the group. The girl was nearest the road.

"You must come soon, dear aunt," she said, turning so that her exquisite profile was softly outlined against the scarlet fan interposed between it and the sun, and addressing the other woman.

"Yes, child, before long. Good-by."

They clasped hands, and deftly kissed each other, as women do; then there was a rustle at the coach's side, a fluttering of scarlet ribbons, a hint of heliotrope, and the girl settled herself in the seat in front of Willard. The lame man got to his place beside her with much difficulty.

There was a touch of the old time in the way they departed from Thomasville; the horses prancing, the coach rattling, and the driver loudly blowing his far-sounding horn. They crossed the railway near a grimy depot, passed along by the drill-ground of the military school, saw some picturesque negro-cabins, with coal-black pickaninnies playing by the front doors; and then they whirled into the pine wood, along a level white road, upon which the sand was fine and thick. On either hand the flat ground, as far as the eye could see between the

thinly-set columnar tree-boles, had been burned over recently, and many old logs and decayed stumps were still smoking. A few miles farther on, the fire had been extinguished weeks before, and now the wild grass was springing up through the ashes. Tinkling cow-bells rang plaintively here and there, where scattered herds ranged free.

Willard's attention alternated from the monotonous but interesting landscape to the back of the shapely head and shoulders of the girl. He counted the knots of dark-scarlet ribbon : he wondered at the blue-blackness of her long, wavy hair. He silently declared that she was the most beautiful sight he ever had seen. No doubt she was ; for she was a perfectly-formed child of the South,—innocent, unsophisticated in appearance, full of the bloom and sweetness and fervor of the climate. With all this, her demeanor was so stately and dignified, — so pleasingly reserved.

She addressed the lame man as Victor, and brother, pointing out to him whatever in the landscape happened to interest her. A very musical, baby-like voice was hers, full of a

freshness and sincerity far removed from the affectation so common in the voices of society women. Willard noted with inward delight how perfectly she ignored his presence; how, when she turned her face to this side or that, she appeared utterly unaware that he sat so close behind her. The breath from her red, dewy lips almost reached his cheek; and sometimes the loose ends of her ribbons fluttered across his eyes. He sat there silent and still, taking in all the freshness and uniqueness of the charming vision, until at length the coach was stopped in front of a lonely country house, to allow a stout red-haired woman, who stood, basket in hand, by the roadside, to get in. She was of the class called Crackers,—the poor, illiterate white folk of the sandy pine lands of Georgia and Florida. She was going to Tallahassee with a large hamper of eggs to sell.

“With your permission, sir,” said the lame man to Willard; and, with that gallantry never wanting in the South, he gave place by his sister to the woman, and took the unoccupied part of the young man’s seat.

The hamper of eggs was taken charge of by the driver; and, with loud puffing and blowing, the stout dame clambered in, and got herself into position, where she obviously crowded her slender companion against the uncushioned side-posts of the rude coach.

"Lordee-e-e, but I *am* tired!" she exclaimed in a wheezing voice. "Huntin' o' hens' nests is no fun in these 'ere woods. But I 'spec' you never, likely, hunted 'em any. My gal, Laura Ann Canzada, she kin 'most beat me a-findin' of 'em. Guess you're quality, ain't ye? an' you don't have hens about, mebbe. Well, some folks must be quality, and some po'; an' I hope you don't mind me a-settin' by ye?"

"Oh, no, I assure you!" said the girl, turning quickly, and smiling very sweetly upon the broad red face. "It is no trouble: I like to have you sit by me. How many eggs have you?"

"Fifty-two dozen, an' ten over," replied the woman. "They're a good lot, an' 'ill bring a quarter a dozen. I need the money jest about now too; fur Laura Ann Canzada is a-goin' fo' to git married, an' she needs some things. You

know a body can't get married 'ithout some new things."

"See what beautiful lilies!" exclaimed the girl, turning quickly, and pointing to some pale, delicate flowers growing in the sand beside the road. There were clusters of blue violets also.

"Them's sand-lilies," said the woman: "they don't amount to nothin'."

"Oh! I like them ever so much, they are so pure and sweet," rejoined the girl. "If I were out there, I should gather a bouquet of them."

"The Lor'!" said the woman contemptuously. "I wouldn't."

When a man loses his head, he usually fancies himself in some way bound to disclose the loss. We all may laugh at the victim; but just how long ago we were in a like fix, we do not care to contemplate.

Willard leaped right out over the wheel of the slow-going coach, and alighted well on his feet in the yielding sand. He went to the roadside, and gathered a great bunch of the lilies. The driver, seeing him out, stopped for him to get in again.

The Cracker woman took advantage of the stillness to fill and light a brown-clay pipe, which she began vigorously smoking. As good luck would have it, the wind carried the astringent whiffs away from the young lady.

By the time Willard had returned to the coach loaded with his floral treasure, the folly of his act had begun to dawn upon him. He actually paused and hesitated at the door. When he sprang out, nothing in the act he contemplated had seemed difficult or out of propriety. Now the matter was totally reversed. It was not permissible, not to be thought of. He glanced at the young lady, and saw, or fancied he saw, an illy-concealed look of annoyance in her face. His first impulse, then, was to throw the flowers down; but a thought struck him. As he passed into the coach he put the lilies in the Cracker woman's lap, and said in a very gentle, deferential tone of voice, "Surely, madam, you cannot think those are ugly."

"W'y, the Lor' now! I'm much erbleeged to ye," said the woman; and she actually blushed. "Them's not so mighty ugly.—Here,

take some of 'em, miss : you said you'd like to have some." She handed two or three of the prettiest of them to the girl, who in turn blushed and hesitated. The ruse was so transparent, the trick so bold, that she scarcely knew what she ought to do. The whole thing was lost on her brother. He had not caught the essence of it. She saw as much by a quick, furtive glance. Really Willard had not expected this turn. It was not a ruse: he had only meant to get rid of the lilies as gracefully as possible. He quickly caught the probable interpretation, and regretted it. There had been nothing clever in the whole affair.

The driver came to the rescue with a great snap of his whip, starting his horses forward at a sweeping trot.

Willard saw the girl take the lilies, and hold them in a self-conscious way. She looked aside as if noting the sudden change taking place in the landscape; for they were now entering the beautiful hill country. In a basin fringed with water-oaks, bays, and magnolias, a little lake, not a half-mile distant, was shining like a great diamond. The road was no

longer sand: it was cut in a dark chocolate soil, now deep down in cool, shady glens, anon on airy ridges, from which the broad plantations were visible for miles. They passed close by the ashes and ruins of what must have been one day a grand country mansion. The heavy round columns of stuccoed brick which had supported the roof of its long veranda were still standing, and one blackened wall was outlined against the foliage of some giant trees. The tenantless negro-quarter, with its hollow square of cabins, was mostly rotted down; and the unkempt orchards and fenceless fields told a most pathetic story of a departed time. And then the hills grew bolder, shot through by tangled ravines, and interrupted by deep ponds and lily-crowded marshes. They saw a snowy heron wading among the spatter-dock and lily-bonnets of a dull pool, and now and then a raft of duck scurried away among the cypress-stems on the margin of a lake. At length their road plunged right into one of the prettiest of those lakes, and they followed. Up came the bright water, higher and higher, until a little stream trickled

into the bed of the coach. They all had to lift their feet to keep from getting them wet. The horses moved slowly, stretching out their necks as if in deep enjoyment of the cool bath after their miles of toil. When they had emerged on the other side, they trailed a damp line in the dusty road for a long way.

At noon they stopped at a country-house, where the driver changed horses, and where the lunch each had brought with him was quietly, and to all appearances selfishly, discussed.

The girl ate little. Willard saw her gliding about in the grove of slender oaks hard by, like some happy dryad out for an airing after a long sleep in the heart of a tree.

The driver, harnessing his horses in the rude open stable, sang in a mellow voice a garbled version of the local favorite.

A tall, lank woman, quite young, but sallow and wrinkled, was hoeing in a vegetable-garden, whose fence of woven pine slats was overrun with luxuriant scuppernong-vines. Sitting on the farmhouse steps, a sun-tanned girl was nursing a chubby boy baby.

There was much evidence of a certain sort of thrift about this place ; but it was the home-spun, hollow, unprogressive sort. The house, the little barn, the fences, the people and their clothing, appeared to have been left over from the last century, an after-taste, so to speak, of the barren, tidy pioneer days. A high-wheeled one-ox cart, for instance, stood with its rude shafts resting against the fence. A heavy hand-loom, with an unfinished strip of copperas-colored cloth on its roller, rested under a lean-to shed. Even while Willard stood curiously gazing, a white-haired but nimble old woman climbed to the high seat of this rude engine, and began that "shuttle-bang, bang, shuttle-bang, bang," so familiar to the ear fifty years ago.

All these primitive elements, taken in connection with the dry, dusky, breezy landscape, the old fields, the shallow furrows in the ploughed lands, had the effect to impress Willard's mind with one side of Floridian life ; for they were now in Florida. In fact, the whole face of things changes as soon as you cross the line. The Georgian roads are so

much better, and the Georgian farmers and planters so much more modern and energetic. Even the Georgian pigs seem to have shorter noses, and less of the greyhound lightness of body, than their Florida cousins.

Once more on the road, the coach soon plunged into a cool, shady hollow, whence it followed the Indian red road up, up to the summit of an airy ridge; and presently, off some miles to the southward, the scattered spires and many-gabled roofs of Tallahassee were outlined against the blue sky and bluer hill-peaks beyond. The sun was nearly down. Lake Jackson shone like a mirror. In every direction broad plantations lay spread from hill to hill, like dull chocolate-colored cloths, upon which giants might repose. Here again they passed orchards of Le Conte pear-trees, and several young orange-groves. Then they were trundled down a long incline, and up a sharp acclivity, to the broad gateway leading into a tangled enclosure, where stood a stately, old-time mansion. Here the girl and her brother got out of the coach; and Willard watched them slowly pass along the broad walk between

the trees, until suddenly a turn of the vehicle placed him in a beautiful street, looking down which he saw the spacious homes of Tallahassee. Now all was shade and breezy coolness. Long lines of oaks canopied the carriage-way, and the sidewalks had still other rows for their especial need. Shrubs of many kinds were a-bloom, and the angular beds of the flower-gardens were gay with color. Mocking-birds were singing.

To Willard it was as if he had been plunged, all at once, into a new, strangely charming world. The spell of the Flower-land was upon him.

CHAPTER V.

INSIDE THE PALE.

THE two or three half-drunken members of the legislature who chanced, between potations, to be sauntering back and forth on the concrete floor of the City Hotel veranda, witnessed the arrival of the "hack" from Thomasville, and saw the unexpected meeting of two warm but long-separated friends.

Willard had scarcely alighted when Cauthorne pounced upon him. They held each other off at arm's-length, and gazed in a rapture of pleased surprise.

"Cauthorne! Is it really you?"

"Willard! Willard! My dear boy!"

Their tones, husky with emotion, meant a great deal. Neither could formulate any definite phrase. Silence and mere ejaculations alternated most expressively. Their embar-

rassment was really schoolboyish in its outward manifestations.

They had been apart for four years, and this meeting was the offspring of the merest chance. As they stood there, the contrast in their physiques was very striking. In fact, no two men could less resemble each other. Cauthorne very tall, broad-shouldered, powerful in body and limb, looked like a bronze Hercules beside Willard, whose medium stature, and lithe, light gracefulness of build was emphasized by the comparison.

As they went into the hotel, they met Arthur Vance coming out. His fine dark face and courtly bearing impressed Willard, as they did every one who came in contact with him. He was so different from ordinary men in person and in manners. He bowed to Cauthorne, and passed on.

A day or two later, when Willard had become well settled in the old hotel, he knocked at the door of Cauthorne's room. He was admitted, and found his friend in the midst of scattered sheets of manuscript, toiling away at his novel.

"I am in a hobble, Cauthorne," he said, half lightly, half despairingly.

"Well, what now?" inquired Cauthorne, looking up, with a pen behind his ear.

"A deuced hobble," continued Willard, dropping into a chair. "It all comes of an *ante-bellum* friendship of the dearest sort betwixt my father and one of the old nabobs here. I didn't dream, when I sent up my card, that I should go and run into such a dilemma."

Cauthorne preserved an attitude of expectant, interested inquiry.

"Really the intimacy was before I was born, I suppose. I have heard my father speak of it, over and over, ever since I can remember. Those visits he used to make every winter to the house of his Tallahassee friend were his favorite theme. The last thing my dear father said to me, when I was setting out from home to come here, was to be sure and call on this dear old Tallahassee friend. You know my father is past travelling now,—partial paralysis."

"As yet the startling difficulty of your situa-

tion fails to impress me," said Cauthorne, pushing a half-empty box of cigars across the table to his friend.

"I know," exclaimed Willard impatiently, "I know; but there's more to come. The old nabob has called upon me; in fact, he has rushed upon me, and overwhelmed me. You cannot imagine how completely he has me in his power."

"There's a point to all this, I imagine," said Cauthorne, — "a startling point, which you will uncover directly, like disclosing a masked battery."

"It was worse than a torpedo under one's feet," said Willard, nervously lighting a cigar. "If there's any one thing I abhor, it's becoming a part of some one's family. I can't bear it. Now, my father used to delight in such a thing. He used to come here, and stay for three months at a time in the old judge's mansion."

"Judge who?" demanded Cauthorne, in a tone of suddenly aroused interest.

"Judge La Rue," replied Willard, — "a stately old-timer, who, in the days of slavery,

lived like a lord, dispensing absolutely unlimited hospitality."

"Judge La Rue," repeated Cauthorne in a wholly inconsequent way.

"Yes," said Willard; "and nothing will satisfy him but that I shall go to his house, baggage and all, and make it my home so long as I stay here. He puts it on high ground, and I see that I cannot refuse him."

"Of course you cannot," said Cauthorne: "you ought not to think of refusing." Then, with the air of one who has the right to speak as an expert, he added, "These Southern folk have very high and very queer notions of hospitality. It would be a mortal offence, an unspeakable breach of etiquette, under the circumstances, for you not to take the judge's house for your hotel. So you may order a dray, and move in."

Willard laughed at his friend's severe levity, little dreaming how joyfully Cauthorne would have accepted such an offer with such a plea to back it. As for the latter gentleman, he gazed abstractedly at the queer old mantle over the queer little fireplace. He drummed on the table with his fingers.

"To be explicit," said Willard, "I have accepted Judge La Rue's offer, and shall, as you say, 'move in' to-morrow."

"You are a lucky dog," exclaimed Cauthorne earnestly. But Willard thought it was sarcasm; for Cauthorne immediately added, "You get out of a dilemma so easily. I thought you had come to me for counsel."

"So I have."

"Yes, after the fact. Little good advice can do you now."

"I am afraid you are right."

"No, I am not. I never was exactly right. I always get there too late. The key is always lost. Some one always gets in ahead of me," cried Cauthorne, with a vehemence which seemed to Willard absurdly out of place. But a moment later he radically changed his tone and manner, and with his old gentle laugh said,—

"You will better understand my feelings in a day or two. You are going into green pastures which I have long been viewing from afar."

Of course Cauthorne's real meaning was lost

on Willard, who had not even the slightest knowledge of his friend's troubles. For a time silence fell between them; Willard lazily smoking, Cauthorne still softly drumming on the table with the fingers of his left hand.

"Well, it's nothing serious, after all," said Willard, as if resolutely shaking off the disagreeable impression of the moment. "I suppose one must cast about for some pleasant antidote. By the way," and he smiled like a suddenly pleased boy, "by the way, I came over from Thomasville with a Tallahassee girl of wonderful beauty. She and her one-legged brother — an ex-Confederate soldier, I suspect — had been visiting an aunt up there. Now, if I could" —

"If you could," interrupted Cauthorne with peculiar emphasis. "How can you help it? Will you shut your eyes, stop your ears, and bridle your tongue?" He had kept all Miss La Rue's comings and goings well in view. He knew all that Willard could tell him, and more. "The judge's daughter is the handsomest, loveliest, most noteworthy girl in Florida. It was she who came in the 'hack'

with you. You are going to be one of the family, her father's guest, her intimate friend, her frantic lover."

The next day Willard took possession of a grand airy room in the La Rue homestead, from whose many-mullioned windows he could look away over a rolling landscape, dotted with old weather-beaten plantation houses, to the vast forests in the mysterious regions of Wakulla.

This room pleased him. Its floor was of white hard wood, smooth as glass, with a worn rug in the centre. A tall mahogany bedstead stood in an airy niche. The walls were papered in dull gray, without border or dado. A round table of heavy workmanship, richly veneered, stood on the rug. A small ebony-framed looking-glass leaned forward above a curious chest of drawers. A landscape in oil, very old, but not valuable, and one of those French lithographic reproductions of the blue-veiled Madonna of Correggio, hung flat and high by dull gold ropes. The windows and the bedstead were curtained in costly lace, yellow with age. The ceiling, grayish sky-blue,

had a central rosette of stucco-work, from which depended a brass chandelier bedecked with hexagonal glass crystals. A small fireplace, containing tall yellow andirons and a curious wire fender, was surmounted by a black mantle of fluted and carved wood. The room had a look of fixedness and amplitude, an old-time scarcity of decoration, a cool soberness of tint, an indescribable atmosphere of broad serenity and changeless repose. It was, in fact, a guest-chamber of the *ante-bellum*, King-Cotton days.

Willard sat by a window across which a magnolia had flung a glossy spray of rich green leaves. The balmy wind from the Gulf came in upon him with the fragrance of yellow jas-mine. He heard a mocking-bird. He looked happy.

One morning, not long after, Cauthorne walked the whole length of that broad street of Tallahassee which runs north and south along the highest ground in the city.

He moved slowly, studying the trees, the fences, the houses, the curiously arranged, lozenge-shaped flower-beds, the tall windmills

for pumping water, the long verandas, the rows of dormer-windows.

When he came to Judge La Rue's place, he saw, through a rift in the foliage, Willard and Miss La Rue sitting on a bench under a mossy live-oak. The stately judge in an easy-chair sat conveniently near. They seemed as contented and smiling as the cloudless sky that shimmered overhead.

"He is inside the pale," thought Cauthorne.

CHAPTER VI.

SOME APPREHENSIONS.

JUDGE LA RUE'S mansion, as to its architecture, was a very plain building, three stories high, or rather two stories and a roof-story, the latter lighted by small dormer-windows. It was of brick stuccoed, as nearly all the better class of houses in middle Florida are, and, under the action of that very peculiar climate, had taken on a most venerable dark-gray color. It stood, as the reader has been told, on the northernmost outskirt of the city, in a little wood of some fifteen or twenty acres, on the west side of the street; and fronted south, its upper windows and verandas overlooking many of the most beautiful scenes in that country, which the Indians had named Tallahassee,—the high and lovely land. Once the grove in which it stood had been tended with

scrupulous care, the trees neatly pruned, the vines trained, the shrubs and plants kept strictly within bounds. Now every thing had a wild, half-neglected look. The fence was shabby, the gates awry. On the north side of the enclosure stood the cabins, once so white and clean, where the household servants, to the number of twenty-five, used to live. The plantation-slaves, of course, never had been here, their quarters being out near Lake Jackson. These cabins were now literally falling down from disuse and consequent decay. The lands of the La Rue estate spread out for some miles, counting several thousand acres of the richest in the region, whilst the La Rue slaves had been numbered by hundreds. So vast a property, with no longer any reliable system of labor, had become unwieldy and unprofitable; but Judge La Rue had steadily refused to sell one foot of it, allowing it to grow up in brambles and sedge rather than see it parcelled out among Crackers and negroes. He had owned some railway-stock before the war, worthless then, which, when peace was declared, he found realizing him a small income. To this,

by "renting out" certain portions of his estate he added as much more, which enabled him to live in a style somewhat better than most of his neighbors could affect. In other words, he kept a coachman, a gardener, some house-servants, a carriage and horses, gave little select dinners, insisted on entertaining such celebrated people as chanced to visit Tallahassee, and, in fact, maintained a creditable shadow of his old manner of living. In the mean time, however, the fences were disappearing from his plantation, and his grand old mansion was becoming more picturesque than comfortable.

Lucie La Rue remembered the old order of things in a shadowy sort of way. She was a year old when the war broke out, five years old when it ended. Her impressions of the glory of Tallahassee in *ante-bellum* days were strong; but they were at second hand, mere reflections of what her father and her brother and her aunt had seen and experienced, exaggerated as such things always are in the telling. Her mother had died in the mid-days of the war, leaving her to the care of her father's maiden sister, a highly educated spinster, as peculiar as

she was cultured, as good at heart as she was exclusive in her social tastes.

Since the close of the war Lucie had been much of the time at a school in Georgia, for Florida is a State without a college of any sort; and she had once been on a visit for a few weeks in Richmond, Va., where she had relations. But she had really seen nothing of society proper. In this old house, as we have seen it, her life bounded by the hill-rimmed horizon of the Tallahassee country, with her father, her aunt, and her brother for companions, she had grown into that perfect loveliness which had made her the recipient of much tender attention from the best young men of the region, most noted and most favored among them Col. Arthur Vance, the rising lawyer and politician. Nor had Lucie's life been at all dull or unsatisfying. Her nature was simple and sincere, responding perfectly to every touch of the rich, warm influences of the climate, and the poetical power of the great change a few years had wrought within the bounds of her vision.

It was this perfect contentment, this beauti-

ful unison, so to speak, between the girl and her surroundings, that had made Cauthorne say to himself, "She is a true type of the transition from the old order of things to the new."

Willard found life at the mansion far less irksome than he had feared. In fact, his reception had been so cordial, his initiation into the family routine so delicately managed, that he was happy before he knew it. Some very strong bond of friendship must have existed between Judge La Rue and Willard's father, to make the old Southerner say, —

"You seem like my own son, sir, being the son of my dear old friend. You are just like him, too, just like him. Ah, he's a rare man, sir, a rare man! He used to make my house gay with his wit. He was the life of it for many a winter. I shall be disappointed if you do not make yourself freely and perfectly at home." He had attended Willard to his room, a servant following with his baggage. "That's the very bed which your father slept in twenty years ago, the last winter he was here. I hope it will hold you as it did him, for many a happy season."

Some men would have mocked in their hearts at this profuse welcome; but Willard knew too well how his father loved this old man, and he was doubly sure of every word's tender sincerity.

Judge La Rue's sister, the stately old maiden who presided over his house, took a very practical view of this introducing of the young man into their home circle.

"You must look at it from every standpoint," she said to the judge, "but most particularly from one."

"And, my dear sister, what one is it?" he asked.

"The matrimonial one," was the laconic answer.

"Humph! I don't just see how that can come up. You know Lucie and Col. Vance"—

"Certainly, dear brother; but they are not engaged. Lucie says they are not," hastily spoke up the sister.

"Well, of course, not formally engaged; but it is all understood, you know. He and I have often discussed the matter," responded Judge La Rue.

"Well, you ought to know as well as I, that all your discussions and understandings of the matter with Col. Vance will not weigh a straw against a romantic love if it should spring up between this young Willard and Lucie. For my part, I think there may be danger."

The judge laughed, considered, and then laughed again.

"It would be hard on the colonel," he finally said. And the tone in which he said it gave Miss Julie La Rue to understand that her brother would not care a straw if the worst should come.

"We'll not trouble ourselves about that, Julie," he added: "Lucie can take care of that."

"Oh, no doubt of it! young girls usually can. I only mentioned the matter on your account. If you are willing to risk it so, there's not a word I can say against it, only if he should take Lucie away" —

The old man started, and actually grew pale. Her last sentence had struck him like a bullet. He met his sister's look with a feeble smile. It was easy to see that they both centred the

whole world in Lucie. If he should take her away, meant the same as if he should snuff out the sun.

"He will talk to her about New York and Boston, and fill her mind full of the fascinating things of life in the great cities," said Miss La Rue; "and you know that nothing so charms a girl. You may depend upon it, there is danger."

The old man did not reply. He sat with downcast eyes and trembling lips, his childish fear of so dreadful a calamity as his sister predicted completely mastering him.

"It would never do, never do," he said at last. "Our flower would wither in the cold North, Julie."

"I should fear so," said Miss La Rue, nervously turning the small emerald on her finger. "And Mr. Willard seems to be a very accomplished and winning person, and—and much younger than Col. Vance."

"He is a delightful boy, just like his father, Julie," said the old man warmly, resting his wrinkled hands on his knees, and gazing at the floor. "He would"—

Just then Lucie entered the room, her face slightly flushed, her eyes very bright. She had a red flower at her throat. She carried her hat by its strings.

"Papa," she said, in a voice which fluttered like a bird getting out of a cage, "he wants to see Murat's grave. He has asked me to show him the way to the cemetery."

She paused, and glanced from her father to her aunt, as if struck with the solemnity of their faces. "Ought I to go?" she added quickly.

The silence following the question was too utter to last. Miss Julie La Rue looked up presently, and said,—

"I see no objection to"—

"Oh, no! certainly, go on. It would be rude to object. Go, child, of course," hastily interrupted the old man.

Lucie stood for a moment longer, idly swinging her hat. Her aunt was more than usually aware of her wonderful beauty and grace.

"Don't keep Mr. Willard waiting, if he is waiting, Lucie," she said gravely. "It will be tea-time soon."

"Oh! we cannot be long gone. It is such a short way, you know, and there's not much to see," replied Lucie, putting on her hat, and tying the strings under her chin.

"And so it begins," said Miss La Rue, when the girl was gone. "They'll turn each other's heads before they get back."

"You make it too strong, Julie," responded the judge. "Lucie has always been a sensible girl, I'm sure."

"Yes," said Miss La Rue, almost bitterly; "but he is just like his father."

And so the interview ended.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TOMB OF A PRINCE.

WILLARD watched, with all an artist's interest, the comings and goings of Lucie about the old house. She seemed quite busy with domestic duties for a great part of the time, tripping lightly up and down the great stairway, and in and out of the spacious dining-room, often carrying in her hand a large bunch of keys. He could not fail to note that she was never trying any of the many kinds of fancy-work so much affected by girls, and that she preferred horseback-riding to any sedentary amusement.

She had not been exactly shy of him, not in the least unfriendly; but he had not readily understood her attitude towards him. A sort of gracious reserve, as he was inclined to term it, a sweet, unstudied, smiling dignity, so marked her manner that he all the time was

half wondering if his presence in the house was not to her a constant annoyance, or, at least, a constant tax upon her patience.

At table she took small part in the conversations ; but she seemed attentive and appreciative, often betraying a sharp desire for knowledge of the ways of the world. When he would touch upon the whirling currents of fashion at the great Northern and Eastern centres, she would lean forward with parted lips and beaming eyes, lending her ear to every word he said.

If he addressed any part of his talk to her, she was always ready with some short, well-turned reply, which seemed to need no rejoinder ; and yet he could not feel that she had avoided conversation. One thing he was sure of : she disclosed new beauties of form and face, new graces of manner, every day. He found himself so interested in her that the garrulity and unbounded courtesy and solicitude of her father were considered as ills to be borne for her sake.

He was touched by a furtive attention she bestowed upon the arrangement of things in

his room. Whenever he walked out to be gone for an hour or two, he found upon his return certain evidences of her delicate taste; a saucer of cut flowers upon his table, the current copy of a magazine, a plate of choice oranges, some little Floridian curiosity, a sea-bean, or a bit of native carving. Finally a little spirit-lamp, a stick of sealing-wax, and the family monogram stamp appeared; as if, in accordance with an old Southern custom, his letters were henceforth expected to bear testimony to his thorough acceptance into the household.

Willard's ready imagination caught strong hold on the romance of his surroundings; and it was with a certain trepidation wholly new to him, a sense of tender hesitancy, that he found himself addressing even the commonest small-talk to Lucie. His consciousness acknowledged her vestal purity, and went a world further to clothe her in a saintly innocence, so childlike, so utterly her own, that he would have given all his wealth to be able to express it on canvas. He compared her with the young ladies he had known, rummaging in his

memory for the most beautiful among them, but there was none at all like her.

When he asked her to go with him to see the grave of Murat, it was more to have her by him in the walk, than on account of any great desire to visit the noted little cemetery where the son of the King of Italy lies buried beside his Virginia bride.

He met her on the broad steps of the front veranda. She was coming in from a stroll in the grove, loaded with jasmine-flowers, sprays of bridal-wreath, and great clusters of the lovely Cherokee-rose. She carried her hat by its ribbons, and her face was slightly flushed with exercise. As he stood beside her on the step, he discovered that she was not so tall as she had appeared. Her perfect symmetry, and the grace and dignity of her bearing, had added to the effect of her stature, which was really only medium. Her forehead was broad and low; her eyes not black, but very dark gray; her complexion almost olive, delicate as a babe's; and her mouth sweet and red, almost thin-lipped, with just a perceptible droop at the corners.

"I was just coming to look for you," he said, taking a rose, and drawing its stem through his button-hole. "I wanted to ask a great favor of you."

"I will be very glad to render you any service," she said, using *will* in place of *shall*, as even educated Southerners almost always do.

"I fear you are too tired now," he said: "you seem to have been walking. But when you can, I hope you will go with me to the cemetery, and show me the grave of Prince Murat."

After a moment's pause he continued, "It is not a particularly cheering thing, this rambling among tombs; but"—

"Oh, the place is small!" she hastened to say; "and it is scarcely well enough kept to have the usual solemnity of appearance. I will see if I can go with you when I have put away my flowers."

She passed on into the hall, leaving in the air about him the rich perfume of the jasmine, and, something sweeter still, the influence of her gentle loveliness.

Willard looked away between the trees to

the westward, and saw the sunlight flaming on the hills that notched the horizon. The mocking-birds were singing, as they sing nowhere else in the world. The wind, setting steadily from the south, poured over him gently, with a smack of saltiness in its current. In his heart some new sentiment blew open like a flower. His nature took in a new element.

When Lucie returned she had her hat on, with the strings tied under her pretty chin. She stopped suddenly, and, loosing a large bunch of keys from her belt, said with a little laugh,—

“Oh, I’ve brought away the keys! Aunt will want to look to supper before I return. I must take them back to her.”

She again turned into the house. Willard had often heard his father tell how every thing in the South has its lock, and how the housekeepers go about loaded with keys. To him this wearing at her belt the evidence of her domestic authority and power was a new and very charming thing, distinguishing the Southern woman from the Northern one. In the case of Lucie it was picturesque; it was strik-

ingly becoming ; it was, he thought, perfectly bewitching.

"I have fetched this for you," she said, when she came out again, holding in her hand a slender orange wand. "Gentlemen seem to find great comfort in canes. This was a tree I planted and cared for with my own hands, and last autumn it died."

Willard took the yellow-green stick, and whisking it in the air said,—

"It could not bear your tender kindness : it died of great good fortune."

"I forgot to cover it," she said gravely ; "and there came a little frost."

"Ah!" he said, "you have ruined my pretty speech. Which way do we go?"

"Out through the south gate yonder. My dog is showing us the way."

A beautiful brown pointer was ambling along the half-obliterated walk, pausing now and then to look back at them. Col. Vance had given her this dog, three or four years ago, when he was regarding her as a little girl.

It was a very satisfying thing, this walking under the broad-armed trees, with the dark

winsome girl so close beside him; and for a time Willard did not speak. He was in no lover-like, sentimental mood; but silence was golden for its own sake.

It chanced that just before they reached the gate he glanced to one side, and saw a little flower shining among some knotted live-oak roots. "A sand-lily," he ejaculated, turning to pluck it.

"It is like those I gathered by the way on our drive from Thomasville," he added, holding out the lily for her to take. This was the first time their journey had been mentioned. "You said you liked them."

"I do think them beautiful," she said, not seeming to notice that he was offering the flower, and turning to wave her hand at her dog in a half-caressing, half-idle way.

Willard let the lily fall when he opened the gate. They passed on, and left it there to wither. But the pointer, which, with more than dog-politeness, had allowed them to precede him through the gate, snatched up the fallen bloom, and ran round his mistress, looking saucily up at her with it shining in his mouth.

The man and the girl looked at each other, and smiled; but nothing was said.

Their way now led them in a narrow street hedged on one side with thick-growing trees. The sun was far down the west slope of the sky, its rays much softened by a sort of Indian-summer mist which often hangs on the Floridian horizon.

Lucie was aware of something in Willard's manners, in his personal bearing, in the modulations of his voice, very different from anything she had ever seen in any one else. She was not sure what it was, but it was fascinating. She felt that he was in some sort a medium of revelation, through whose agency she was to look, if only for a momentary glance, over into some romantic field of experience, a field lying ever so far away from the happy, dull little eddy of Tallahassee life. As she walked by his side she noted with a girl's quick eyes how perfectly his clothes fitted him from head to foot, and how easily and gracefully he did every thing, even to holding the little cane in the hollows of his elbows behind him. He seemed to have so little consciousness

of himself, and such a light way of regarding her, which way, however, was as manly and sincere as it was light. She found herself voluntarily susceptible and receptive when he addressed her: he had had such wide experience for so young a man; he could so ably explain the mysteries of New York and London and Parisian society. The horizon of his worldly knowledge seemed to be the periphery of highest civilization. She was young, she was childlike in her imagination. She was healthily hungry for just such information, just such kaleidoscopic glimpses of the great outer world, as he voluntarily, and without an effort, gave her. Natures like hers, young, intense, receptive, keep what they get. They are not deleterious, and they are long-lived; and he who first impresses them impresses them for the longest time.

As they passed along, beautiful views were opened to them of deep vales with hills beyond. The yellowish building known as the Academy—a high school, so called, for boys—crowned an eminence; near by were some shapeless mounds, probably former military

defences. They turned from one street to another, passing under enormous live-oak trees, and in front of low-roofed, reposeful-looking houses, and came at last to a sort of stile giving into a small enclosure, where, amid a wild tangle of vines, bushes, and flowers, gleamed the ugly snow of the tombstones.

Murat and his wife sleep side by side under simple slabs. At the head of each grave, rises a white-marble shaft. A stuccoed brick wall had once protected the spot; but now a large part of a side had fallen down, and a big pine stump, where a tree had recently been cut, stood in the ragged breach. It was a pitifully neglected and unkempt spot. Some bridal-wreath bushes, heavy with bloom, hung over the little wooden gate now falling off its hinges.

"It is nothing to see," said Lucie, seating herself upon a projection of the broken wall, and taking a charmingly listless attitude.

Willard looked at her instead of the graves. Until now he had not noticed how picturesquely she was dressed,—a simple gown of white stuff, with a crimson ruffle at the neck and

wrists ; a palmetto hat, beautifully braided, lined with the same deep color of the ruffles.

His eyes filled with a strange light, half smile, half wonder. A few months ago he had been at the Grosvenor private view ; and now he was rapidly thinking what a triumph this girl with her litheness and languor, her strength, her immobility, her intensity, her simplicity, her complexity, her picturesqueness, might win among the artistic æsthetes of London.

He sat down at her feet. She hung above him like a study in white and scarlet against a shimmering background of pale green foliage. In that foliage a mocking-bird was whistling and trilling. Lucie smiled down at the young man, and said,—

“Are you through with sight-seeing? shall we return?”

“The scene has overpowered me; let me rest,” he answered, his half-closed eyes fixed steadily upon her. “There is untold luxury in lying here.”

She got up, and stepped in between the pyramidal gravestones, shaking a cloud of white

petals from a little tree as she passed. Willard thought Oscar Wilde had never been caught in such a shower of fragrant flakes.

"Will you read the inscriptions before we go?" called Lucie.

Slowly pulling himself back from his artistic dreaming, he arose and joined her.

They were half-kneeling side by side, deciphering the difficult carvings, when, with a sharp clatter of iron shoes, a horse passed swiftly in the street. They looked up. Col. Vance lifted his hat, and bent low in his saddle. Lucie blushed.

"It is quite time to return, if you please," she said, rising almost hurriedly.

The mellow sunlight was going in a level flood from the hill-top at Bellevue, the Murat homestead, to the hill-top where they stood by the Murat tombs. The intervening valley was dark with shadows, like the valley all must cross.

Going back by the way they had come, Willard noticed that he must often quicken his step to keep pace with Miss La Rue. She was inclined to monosyllables in replying to his

remarks. A great reserve had suddenly mastered her. She had removed herself from him just as far as she had been on the day they journeyed together from Thomasville.

As often happens, the wings of the escaping bird disclosed the most beautiful colors. A tremor began in Willard's breast.

They reached the steps of the old gray house. She started to trip up ahead of him. She was eager to be alone for a while. Her impulse startled him. He put out his hand, and, gently holding her back, looked into her face. In a second, a sense of the unpardonable rudeness of his involuntary act rushed upon him. He saw a flare of surprise overspread her face.

"Pardon," he said, by a supreme effort mastering himself. "I thought there was a spider on your hat-ribbon. I hate insects. They almost frighten me."

She smiled, very deftly loosed the knot of ribbon at her chin, and slipped off her hat. His agitation amused her.

"You were mistaken," she said, and went into the house.

When Willard reached his room, he took a pencil, and made a hasty sketch from memory of Lucie as she had appeared to him while lying for those brief moments at her feet.

There was a rustling, velvet-like sound at his window: it was the wind dragging the magnolia spray across the upper panes.

CHAPTER VIII.

TWO INVITATIONS.

CAUTHORNE had been so absorbed in his novel that he had made no note of the flight of the days. February was nearly gone, and with it the shooting season, so far as it concerned the quails. Now, in all the world there is no place like the Tallahassee country for sport with the bob-whites, there called partridges. The old plantations, with their hedges of Cherokee-rose, their thickets of scrub-oak, their fields of weeds, and their patches of oat-stubble, afford perfect cover for the game; while the climate is so mild, the land so dry in the nesting season, and the hawks and foxes so few, that nothing seems to interfere with the increase of the bevies.

Cauthorne was an enthusiastic and a very accomplished sportsman. In fact, he consid-

ered himself an incomparable shot. He belonged to a crack gun-club of New York, and had worn its champion badge whenever he had found himself present at its annual pigeon-match. He had killed his seventy-five birds straight at thirty-one yards rise. He had made fourteen successful double shots in succession, from ground traps, in a strong wind. These feats were performed, as a matter of course, with a shot-gun. But he was no less a rifleman. He had usually won at the Creedmoor ranges. He had broken thirty glass balls in succession, cast into the air at fifteen paces, this with a thirty-two calibre rifle. It was in the field behind the pointers and setters, that he had won the best fame. He had never been beaten on grouse, woodcock, or quail. The rising bird rarely escaped his first barrel ; but if it did, then his second cut it down, the reports ringing out in such rapid succession as to almost run together.

The reader can well understand that Cauthorne's surprise was somewhat tempered with pleasure when he received a polite note from Col. Vance, the purport of which will appear in the following copy, taken from memory :—

DEAR SIR,—I have just become acquainted with your friend Mr. Willard. He has accepted an invitation to shoot with me over some fine partridge-cover on one of my estates. I shall be highly pleased if you will consent to join us. I can promise you a day of rare sport, and a tolerable dinner at the plantation house. To-morrow is the day. If you will do me the honor of accepting, I will call for you early with a carriage.

Yours to command,

ARTHUR VANCE.

To MR. CAUTHORNE.

The servant stood waiting, and Cauthorne acted on his first impulse, which was to accept. When the note had been written, and was on its way to Col. Vance, he would have recalled it if he had been able. It struck him that this sudden recognition of his personal standing by the proud Southerner had grown out of Willard's lodgement at Judge La Rue's, a thing not pleasant to contemplate. While he was biting his mustache, and scowling, his friend Willard came in. Of late these coming-in had been very desultory, as if they had been the results of so many erratic efforts to back out of the charm which had enveloped him. His stays had been short, his talk scrappy and unsatisfactory.

Cauthorne handed Willard Col. Vance's card of invitation.

"Yes: he was speaking to me about what fine shooting the surrounding country affords; and I expressed a desire, and so forth," said Willard. "I told him you couldn't be beaten with a gun.

"Ah, he's a champion, is he!" exclaimed this handsome politician. "Then I must give him a turn. If he is your friend, you will not object to my inviting him to join us."

"A deuced patronizing way!" muttered Cauthorne.

"Oh, no!" said Willard: "a Southern way. You will find him delightful company when the ice is once broken."

"Confound the ice!" thundered Cauthorne, in a momentary explosion of what combustibles had been accumulating in him for the past fortnight or so. "Confound the ice! I don't want it broken! Let it freeze thicker, and stay longer."

Willard laughed. He knew that this one blast ended the storm.

"Of course you have accepted," he said.

"Yes: of course," said Cauthorne. "Did you ever know me to do a sensible thing in an emergency? Of course I have very promptly accepted." And he laughed too.

"You can always be relied upon to do just the cleverest things possible," said Willard. "It would have been beastly rough in you to have refused. I like him, Cauthorne, and I can tell you that he's no ordinary man."

"A clever politician, I take it," said Cauthorne.

"More than that. You will say so before to-morrow night. He is a man of rare personal gifts. He has a big soul, and a bigger intellect," warmly responded Willard.

"He seems to have made a proselyte of you," rejoined Cauthorne. "No wonder his chances for the next governorship of Florida brighten daily. If he can capture you so easily, what can he do with these listless sand-lappers and peanut-crackers!"

They lighted cigars, and, as became true Tallahassee folk, went out for a stroll in the cool afternoon. They walked down Adams Street south from the hotel, until they came

to one of those open squares, which, covered with a scattered growth of immense live-oak trees, are such a peculiar and strikingly Southern feature of the city.

They sat down upon the buttressed roots of one of the oaks, whence they could look away beyond the hill-spurs to the low swamps of Wakulla, out of which rises the far-famed and mysterious smoke column of the so-called volcano. The sky overhead, seen through rifts in the foliage, was blue and cloudless; but heavy Gulf-caps hung on the horizon south. There was a dancing silver film in the atmosphere of the mid-distance, unlike any thing ever seen in a Northern climate. The wood, fringing the ridge a mile away, waved its shadowy tree-tops to the fitful motions of a breeze. A long angular line of water-fowl slowly flew northwestward, so high that the individual birds looked like mere flickering specks; but their clanging voices fell to earth with great distinctness and power. A ragged negro, whose face wore the marks of utter resignation to hopeless poverty, went past in a rude cart, drawn by a lean little ox, working

between shafts. Following this came a fine old-fashioned rockaway with a pair of match bays, and a dapper colored driver. Inside were ladies and children who looked serenely happy. A gay party of young men and girls, returning from a ride to Lake Bradford and the country-seat of Gov. Bloxham, some distance west of the city, clattered along the road which winds diagonally through the square, their horses seeming to enjoy the merry talk and laughter as much as did the riders. The girls were picturesquely habited; and their broad palmetto hats shaded faces as brown as nuts, and as pink-cheeked as peaches. The youths were all sallow and slender alike, sitting their horses like born troopers, and showing a dash of something like knighthood in their attentions to their gentle companions. It was a cavalcade of romance, such as is conjured up by the old Spanish tales. One thing was noticeable: despite the bright colors and tasteful drapings, these were the children of parents made poor by the recent sectional downfall. The scantiness of luxuries was not hidden by the pretty maidenly arts of deception with

needle and ribbons. The young men made little pretension to fashionable dress. It was a fair exhibition of the state of the middle and better classes of young people in the region. They were the sons and daughters of gentlemen turned shopkeepers, and of ladies turned domestic laborers. It marked the neutral ground between the old South and the future South. That cavalcade might furnish thought for a volume.

"These Southern girls are wonderfully beautiful, as a general thing," said Willard. "I took careful note, and there was not an unattractive one in that party. They are so lithe and graceful, too, and so fearless on horseback, especially here in Tallahassee."

"You are right," said Cauthorne; "and you may add that they are less understood, in fact, more misunderstood, than the girls of any section in this country, or in the enlightened world. I should much like to know them better. Truth to say, I *must* know them, and know them well, else my novel must fall dead."

"My dear fellow, you shall know them right away," exclaimed Willard. "I have a pressing

request to introduce you at Judge La Rue's next Thursday evening. A number of the best Tallahassee people, young and old, will be there. It will be a capital chance for you."

"And I willingly, nay, wilfully, shall turn it to account. I am utterly wreaking myself upon this story. It is my heroine that bothers me. I need this opportunity to find a model for her. Is Miss La Rue friendly, communicative?"

"Not exactly: that is," said Willard, frowning like one who is trying to untie a knot, "she is naïve and enigmatical, whilst she is pleasing you with her sweetness and kindness of manner. She seems untrained, and yet quite formal. Oh, well! I can't express it. She's the most beautiful and charming girl I ever saw, that's the upshot of it."

"And so you are crazy, as usual, and make love to her from morning till"—

"No," interrupted Willard, "I do nothing of the sort. She has a way of keeping one constantly on his guard. One feels in her presence like a pilgrim just reaching a holy shrine: he is too reverentially happy for any

further effort, so he slips down at her feet, and" —

"Infernal nonsense!" exclaimed Cauthorne. "I am a flesh-and-blood man, and a democrat. I'll not slip down at her feet. I'll stand up in front of her, and she'll have to look up to me if there is any looking-up done." He got up as he spoke; and Willard glanced admiringly over his stalwart frame and into his resolute face, so lit with his half-earnest, half-mocking mood, that it was hard to say whether he were really feigning this burst of feeling.

The sun fell behind the bold hills in the west, and set ablaze the upper domes of the Gulf-caps; the silver of the air was turned to a dusky gray. The breeze fell to stillness; but a heavy waft of perfume came from the flower-gardens of the old Walker homestead, and the mocking-birds redoubled their singing.

Returning to the hotel, Cauthorne and Willard met a party of three or four legislators, and in their midst Col. Vance, who came forward and shook hands cordially with both.

"Soon in the morning," he said, in a deep, rich voice, so full of friendliness and comrade-

ship, "soon in the morning we will go after the partridges. Have you a gun, Mr. Cau-thorne?"

"The very best one in the world," was the prompt reply.

"I have its mate, then," said Vance, bowing; "but there our equality ends. You are an incomparable field-shot, your friend informs me; and I recollect some reports of your achievements in the London Field."

"My matches with Major Tilney-Dubois, of her Majesty's Light Guards?"

"Yes: they were cleverly won, sir."

CHAPTER IX.

SUNRISE ON THE AUGUSTINE ROAD.

IN springtime the mornings fill Tallahassee with a glory not to be found anywhere else. No stranger, chancing to stop in the city for a day or two, can fail to notice so striking a local feature of the climate. It may rain all night, and it sometimes does, with a driving wind howling a mad accompaniment to the swashing flood; but the morning will break up the clouds, and the sunrise will be supremely fine. From the middle of February to the middle of May, the true Tallahassee springtime, it is very seldom that the sun gets up behind a cloud.

Day had just fairly appeared in the east, with gray lines of sky and spears of amber light alternating above the billowy horizon, when Cauthorne was called, and informed that

Col. Vance's carriage was waiting for him. Would he take a cup of coffee in his room, before starting? He would: he took two cups, a biscuit, and a glass of wine. Willard was already in the carriage by Col. Vance's side, when Cauthorne made his appearance.

"You do not intend to kill the birds on their roosting-grounds, I hope?" said the latter, mildly grumbling.

"You don't call this early, sir," replied Vance. "Remember we have five miles to drive. The sun will be fairly up by the time we reach the first hill-top on the Augustine road, and the quails will be whistling before we arrive at my kennels."

Willard yawned, and said,—

"Really, it is a late start. You were a horrible while dressing."

"I was bolting my breakfast," rejoined Cauthorne.

"Your breakfast! Why didn't you ask me to join you? I haven't had a morsel since tea," said Willard.

Col. Vance smiled grimly. He had broken his fast before dawn.

"At my plantation house," he said, "I will give you a country lunch before we take to the fields. It will be ready for us at ten. We will not dine till our shooting is over."

Cauthorne got into the carriage. The horses' heads were turned eastward. They were driven at a swinging trot past the Capitol, down the long incline to where the street ends in the Augustine road, and farther, faster down into a rippling little stream of clear water. They dashed noisily across this, and along a level sandy stretch, then up a bold hill, broad fields on one hand, a dense wood on the other. The air, with just a touch of chilliness in it, hung, like the atmosphere in some pictures, still and slightly misty over every thing, without so much as stirring a leaf, destroying the effect of distance by making all objects, near and far, present the same gray-blue dimness of body, the same uncertainty of outline. However, when they had reached the summit of the hill, they saw a great flare in the east, and, almost startlingly soon, the sun leaped above the horizon. All the highest points of land were glorified. The landscape now looked

like a sea whose billows were phosphorescent with the troughs between inky black. The wild ducks in small flocks whirred overhead, going from their resting-places in La Fayette Lake to their feeding-places in the shallow weedy ponds farther up among the swamps.

On their right as they passed, they saw a delightfully homelike country house withdrawn among luxuriant foliage. It was flanked with spacious barns and cotton-houses. Blooming orchards of peach and pear and plum trees clothed the hill-sides hard by. A little farther on a party of colored men were ploughing with mules. The soil they turned over was almost Indian red, with every appearance of incomparable fertility. And now, the road rising a few feet higher, they had a fine bird's-eye view of a shallow valley, a miniature lake, and a dark cypress-swamp. The foliage of the trees took on every tinge of green, gray, and brown ; the fields, mostly fresh-ploughed, were red and chocolate ; the sky was turquoise overhead, paler farther down, and rose-color at the horizon.

Cauthorne and Willard forgot to regret

longer the loss of their morning nap. Such a sunrise and such air, with the quietly charming landscapes and bucolic accompaniments, more than compensated for the fleeting inconvenience.

For much of the way a neglected hedge of Cherokee rose-bushes, or rather vines, showed upon one or the other side of the road, the blooms shining fair and sweet amid the dark tangles. The yellow jasmine was everywhere. Its perfume filled space. In spots the ground was blue with violets.

"The planters here once indulged the belief that a fence could be made of these rose-vines," said Vance. "Those tangled rows are the result."

"What a beautiful theory it was!" exclaimed Willard. "Just imagine a plantation in this favored climate, enclosed with a hedge of roses and jasmines! Take this place, for instance," he continued after a pause, waving his hand toward a broad stretch of level fields: "fling round it such a fence, plant odorous white lilies in the pond yonder, build a model cottage in among those oaks on the hill, and then"—

"What then?" demanded Cauthorne as Willard hesitated.

"Why, swing in a hammock, and listen to the mocking-birds, and sip scuppernong, and be a poem!" was the reply.

Col. Vance laughed as a man does who likes poetry, but who does not believe it is the whole of life.

Cauthorne's face relaxed into an expression of friendly contempt as he said, "Have you a lily in your button-hole, Willard?"

There was a gush of music from the dewy trees, a swell of wind from the Gulf, a throb of warmth, a deepening of colors, a lessening of perfumes: the sunrise was accomplished. Day was in full bloom.

"If we had come out this morning to fight a duel, it would be over about now," said Willard, after some moments of silence.

"What an inconsequent remark!" exclaimed Cauthorne.

"I don't know about that," was the rejoinder. "I have always coupled duelling with Southern life. It is one of the accepted characteristics of sun-land society."

"I hope," said Col. Vance gravely, "that the great duel lately fought between the North and the South has forever driven from the hearts of men in this country all love of mortal combat."

"Amen," said Cauthorne.

Willard's mind was in a skipping mood. The question of duelling thus peremptorily settled, he said, —

"Since I have been here I have been every day more and more impressed with the great error into which I had fallen, as to the topography of Florida. Somehow I had always indulged the idea of one vast tropical plain covered with trees and reeds and bay-thickets, half-submerged in water. I never dreamed of a picturesque hill-country like this. The most beautiful parts of Lombardy are not more restful, and not nearly so suggestive of artistic effects."

"Why are you not prosperous here?" said Cauthorne, turning from Willard to Vance. "You certainly have the most fertile country in the South."

"Our curse, sir, will be apparent to you when you have closely studied our agricultural

situation, and the conditions of our connection with the great centres of commerce. We are isolated. We have but one railroad; and its interests are against us, and in favor of the orange-region up the St. John's River. Consequently we have no means of rapid transit for our products. But our great curse, and I say it with the deepest sympathy for that unfortunate race, is the negro. In this county, for instance, there are twenty thousand inhabitants: less than four thousand are whites; the rest are illiterate, indolent, worthless negroes. Viewed in an agricultural way, here is a dead element, comprising more than four-fifths of our population,—an element which used to be the motor of our immense prosperity. Once it was a thing of vast material moment: now it has ceased to be accounted as of value except in a doubtful political sense. To make it plain, suppose all your teeming hordes of agricultural laborers in the North should suddenly lay down the plough, and quit your fields for political pursuits! At the end of five or six years how would your prairies compare with our plantations here?"

To Cauthorne's mind this was a new way of putting the facts. He would have been glad to press the question further; but they had reached the gate of Vance's plantation, and the matter in hand was to prepare for the day's sport.

CHAPTER X.

A LADY IN BROWN AND GOLD.

ON the afternoon of the day preceding that of the quail-hunt, Willard had brought a thick portfolio of sketches from his room for Lucie to examine.

"You need not look at them now," he said, sitting down by her on a long settle under a tree near the house. "You may keep the book, and run through it at your leisure. I want you to talk with me at present."

"I can listen," she said; "but I fear I have nothing interesting to say."

"You might answer questions."

"Not hard ones," she said, shaking her head, and smiling archly like a little girl.

"Oh! I could not think of troubling you with any thing difficult," he said. "To begin with, I should like to know something about Col. Vance."

For a minute she was silent; then, "Papa could tell you," she simply said.

Willard looked steadily at her. Her profile was as calm and sweet as if nothing had been said. Was this art? He could not tell. After all, it might be that she cared nothing for Vance. He had been chafing a day or two over the discovery, as he thought, of a lover-like relation between them. It may be asked why he cared. If the question had been asked of him, he would not have answered. He knew that he was delighted with her, that she impressed him differently from other beautiful girls; that she was delightfully enigmatical; that she was just what his father had described a Southern girl as being, and much more; but he was cool-headed enough to decide that he was not in love. All the same a strangely tender feeling crept over him, as he looked at her: this he was deliciously conscious of. He had never felt precisely the same thing before. It was not passion, he was sure of it. He recalled his foolish suddenness of giving way to something of this sort at the veranda-steps on their return from the cemetery the other

evening, and how adroitly he had avoided being caught. He tried to put this and that together, and, in a way, to analyze his condition. The result was elusive.

"No doubt your father could tell me," he said presently; "but what if I would rather have it from you? And, besides, I don't care about hearing of Col. Vance's political standing and prospects, his financial condition, or his war-record."

She turned her eyes, those deep, sweet, dangerous gray eyes, full upon him, and their spell caught him. He knew much of the world, he had been everywhere, he had schooled himself to resist and to conquer eyes. Now, however, all his training failed him, and in a moment he was lost. He said something foolish, of course. A young man always does under such pressure. His wits forsake him utterly; and he blindly reaches out after the ill-defined object of his momentary desire,—reaches out as a child reaches after fire or the moon. Be it said to his lasting credit, Willard was no trifler. He worshipped beauty in a light, airy way, and was by nature and

education led to posture before it ; but he was sincere. If his actions were often too forthright, they never were any thing but innocent. When Lucie thus inquiringly looked at him, she said,—

“I cannot quite understand you.”

“You must understand me,” he said, in his low, musical way. “There is something I so much want to know.” He leaned toward her ; but his eyes were downcast, and he showed no emotion. She stooped to pick up a small bit of blank paper which had slipped from the portfolio. The scarlet flower fell from her throat to the ground. He snatched it very quickly. Their heads were very close together as they stooped thus. The omnipresent mocking-bird was singing in the tree above them. A heavy braid of the girl’s black hair dropped forward and downward past her cheek, and lay for a second close to Willard’s lips. A strange perfume, such as Baudelaire meant to describe in *La Chevelure*, not of any flower, but sweeter and daintier, as if from the petals of her girlhood’s bloom, floated round him.

“I should like to know,” he all but whis-

pered, "how much you think of him. Do you love him?"

She straightened herself quickly, but did not answer. As though she had not heard his words, she said,—

"You are going out shooting to-morrow?"

"Yes: who told you?" he replied quickly.

She smiled, and Willard thought her lips grew brighter. After a little she said,—

"I heard papa and Col. Vance speaking of it over their pipes and wine." Then she glanced up, and added, "What do gentlemen find so fascinating in killing birds?"

"I don't know—don't know," responded Willard, slowly recovering as from a spell.

Lucie did not open the portfolio until the next day, when a great quiet was hanging about the old house. Her father had gone down town, her aunt was sewing on the back veranda, her brother was out at the plantation-quarters; Willard was, of course, quail-shooting.

She went to her favorite seat at the root of a broad-armed oak, and spread the book upon her lap. Many of the sketches were mere pen-

cil-notes of places, persons, and things, hurriedly caught here and there in his travels; but there were a number of them done in neutral washes, in crayon and in pastel, the last-mentioned presenting some strikingly good effects.

Lucie, as she sat slowly turning the leaves, was herself a picture, richly brilliant and Southern, coming out fine and strong against the gray background of the huge tree-bole. She wore a silver-colored lawn, with white and scarlet ruffles at the neck and wrists. A dark red rose shone in her hair. Her almost brown complexion, her soft dark eyes, her long black lashes and straight brow, her red lips and pink-touched cheeks, gave just the colors and glows of the semi-tropic. Her slender, rather long, high-arched feet were incased in genuine kid shoes, showing the scarlet broidered stockings between the many straps, as was the prevalent fashion. She was slowly going through the portfolio, leaf by leaf, her face showing almost childish delight. In fact, she never before had enjoyed such a treat. Art-education was neglected, almost wholly, in the South before the

war; since then there has been no chance to make amends. Hence the lack of poets and other artists in a region where nature is itself a great, passionate, dramatic poem, a vast kaleidoscope of dazzling pictures. So absorbed was she, the approach of an old limping negress was not noticed until a well-known voice exclaimed,—

“De lor’, chile! wha’ yo’ git dem poorties?”

“Good-morning, auntie Liza,” said Lucie, looking up into the fat but much-wrinkled face of the former slave. “How are you feeling this morning?”

“Oh! tol’ble, thank you, chile. My ole back ’ll never git well, I s’pose; but de good Lor’ app’nts our days, chile. But wha’ yo’ git dem poorties?”

“They are Mr. Willard’s. I am only looking at them.”

“Powerful nice man, dat Mr. Willard, he sho’ly is. Did he make dem?”

“Yes, auntie.”

“Bress my soul, now, ain’t dey nice! Jes’ look at dat now! An’ dat! Don’t you wish

Mars' Vance could make poorties like dem, honey?"

"Maybe he can, auntie Liza: you don't know."

"Nary time, chile, nary time. De gentlem in de Souf don't come up to de gentlem in de Norf in sich things."

"Now, auntie Liza!" said Lucie in a deprecating tone, "you ought to be ashamed to take sides against your own folks."

The old negress leaned on a staff she carried, put her left hand on the small of her back, and, after a preliminary moan or two, replied,—

"Now, honey, ye make fun ob ole Liza. I's not takin' no sides agin my folks. We's allus been quality, chile, an' you knows it; but de folks up Norf dey's smart, dey is. Dey looks on de freedom side ob de question."

"Now, now!" cried Lucie with mock severity, "you are running off into politics."

"Well, chile, s'pose I is, den what? Ain't I eighty-nine year ole? Don't I know what's what? S'pose I got no gumption? You needn't laugh: I knows you, bress yo' sweet

soul. But as I was a-sayin', dey's a big diff'-ence 'tween de gentlem ob de Norf and de gentlem ob de Souf. 'Course I lubs de Souf gentlem de bes' in a fam'ly way; but de gentlem ob de Norf he's de bes' sot on de freedom question, an' he see more plainer de situation ob de colored folks, he does. Now, f'r instance, Mr. Willard,—he meet me, an' he say 'Good-mornin', madam,' same like I was white. But Mars' Vance, he say, 'Howdy, Liza,' jes' like I wasn't free nor nuffin'. I takes notice ob de difference; an' I says to myself, 'Liza, dis is too plain: de gentlem f'om de Norf is de smartest, he sho'ly is.'"

Lucie had not kept the run of the old woman's talk. Her mind was busy with the sketches. At length she came to one which fairly startled her. It was a girl with long gold-yellow hair, and amber eyes, standing with one fair hand resting on the shaggy head of a dog, the other hand clasping a white lily. The drapery of the figure was old-gold, and its attitude and facial expression gave the idea of pleased expectancy. It was a sketch of rare power and beauty, done somewhat in the style

of Whistler, a study in brown and gold, evidently taken from a model of most striking loveliness. Lucie gazed at it in silence, actually trembling in rapt admiration of its strange sweetness and splendor.

"Hoop-ee-too!" exclaimed auntie Liza: "dat's 'is sweetheart, sho's yo' born, chile. She's mighty poorty too."

"Oh, no, auntie! it isn't his—it isn't his—that is, it isn't any one at all. It's just a fancy picture, you know," Lucie hastened to say, still holding it out before her, and still trembling.

"Neber you fool yo'self, honey: de business is too plain. No gentlem gwine to tote dat picter roun' 'dout he lub de gal. It'd be agin natur' mos'ly, an' you know dat's a fac'."

"He may have sketched it from one of the London beauties he so often speaks about," Lucie said to herself, giving no ear to auntie Liza's prattle.

"Took it f'om his sweetheart, dat's what he did; and she mus' be de poortiest gal alibe, she sho'ly must."

Lucie could not take her eyes off the beautiful form and fascinating face. Deep feelings were stirring in her. She murmured,—

"He has been used to meeting and talking with girls like that. How poor and plain and ugly I must look!"

"Not a bit ob dat, chile: you neber looked ugly to nobody. Mr. Willard no fool. He done tuck in all yo' bearin's; an' ef you wusn't done 'gaged to Mars' Vance, he go for ter take yo' in out'n de wet 'mejetly, he sho'ly would. He's smart, chile, he is, fur a fac'."

"Who said I was engaged to Col. Vance, auntie?" said Lucie quickly.

"Well, ain't ye?" cried old Liza, almost spitefully.

Lucie did not reply. She reluctantly put the sketch in its place, and closed the portfolio. She had had a peep into a new world, and the spell of its fascination was upon her. She looked up at the dull, brown-gray walls of the old homestead, and all around at the unkempt trees and shrubs. For the first time, something like a realization of the narrowness and poverty of her life fell into her heart, and sank to the bottom like lead. For a long time she sat in a drooping posture, with an intense look of longing in her eyes.

CHAPTER XI.

IN THE QUAIL-COVER.

WILLARD had never tasted a Southern corn-cake, and it was somewhat a novelty even to Cauthorne. Indeed, the lunch at Vance's plantation-house was altogether a strange, and, upon the whole, an enjoyable meal. Besides the corn-cakes, there were thinly-cut broiled bacon, fried sweet-potatoes, broiled perch, coffee, and scuppernong wine, all served at once by a colored woman, whose homespun dress and headkerchief were as white as snow. The dining-room was a very large one, arranged with reference to warm weather, with three sides composed of venetian blinds, so that it could, at pleasure, be turned into an open veranda. Now it was but partially closed. From where Cauthorne and Willard sat side by side at the table, they could see to the farthest hills on the horizon in two directions.

It was past ten o'clock when they had finished their coffee; and by the time their cigars were burned out, and the dogs brought up, the sun had nearly touched the meridian. But the cover was near by; and, once they had started, it was not long till they had scattered a fine bevy of quails in a field of low weeds and sedge-grass. Cauthorne and Vance each made a fine double-shot, bringing four birds to bag. Willard did not lift his gun. He was, in fact, examining some lily-pads in a little pool, at the time the birds rose. It was rather dry for the dogs' noses. They did not work well. The quail took to wing, too, at great distances; but Vance and Cauthorne cut them down all the same. Willard loitered by the thin, tangled hedges of Cherokee-rose and yellow jas- mine, now and then putting aside his gun to whip from his pocket a little sketch-book and a pencil, as some new combination of foliage or some striking bit of landscape attracted his artistic notice. He heard the sudden, spiteful reports of his companions' guns, now herè, now there, as they zealously followed the frightened bevies. The dog set apart for his

use had soon deserted him, to go join the huntsmen of birds instead of staying with the sketcher of flowers. He did not note the loss. The mild sunshine fell upon him, the blue sky beamed overhead, the perfumes hung round him. In the course of his slow rambling, he came upon a high bluff overlooking a miniature lake. He cast himself upon the ground under some pine-trees, amid a scattered growth of sand-lilies. Here he lay and dreamed, dimly conscious all the time of the roaring guns and the sweet smells. The spirit of the South was taking deep hold of him. Ragged negroes ploughing in an adjacent field were singing "Dixie," their voices ringing clear and high. Now and then the words of the song, intensely Southern, with the incongruous conditions accompanying them, grated harshly on his ear. It seemed so strange that these freed-men could sing at all, much less with such feeling, that red-hot secession song. A small, sluggish alligator crept out of the lake, and stretched itself on a log in the sun. Willard sketched it in all its realistic ugliness, with some saw-grass and spatter-dock showing in

the background. Then a snake-bird came wriggling along in the clear water, its head above the surface, its meandering neck and lean body below. It looked like a winged serpent, a veritable water-dragon. This he also caught in a slight sketch, showing some broad-leaved riparian weeds, and tall, slender, reed-grass stalks. The guns were now far in the distance, their softened reports rising along the horizon with nothing in them to startle the wild things of the lake. Now and then beautiful wood-ducks, in all the glory of variegated plumage, sailed by on the open water from one to another thicket of bay or cypress, their trim bodies suspended in duplicate below them. A great white-breasted, forked-tailed hawk skimmed the lake's surface like a giant swallow. Over against where he sat, a little brook fell into the lake; near the current a belted halcyon swung on a magnolia-bough, now and then cackling loudly, or dropping into the water with a splash, and coming out bright and dry, with a fish in his mouth. Willard, in all his rambles, had never happened upon a spot so full of the spirit of poetry. The little

landscape was primeval. The air was more ancient and pastoral, with those half-savage negro voices ringing down it, than any line of Theocritus. But what were those voices singing? The tune had changed, and the words,—

“Oh, de Tallahassee girl she’s a charmer,
She sings like de mocking-bird in May,”—

entering his ears, seemed to diffuse themselves, like some potent charm, all through him. Her form and her face, who was the only Tallahassee girl for him, came into the field of his inner vision, with all their simple grace and inexpressible beauty. Of late she had been too much in his mind; sleeping or waking, he could not get her quite out of sight. He was not happy away from her.

Col. Vance and Cauthorne, during this time, had been enjoying such sport as rarely comes, even to the most inveterate roamer by flood and field. It is no dressed-up story, it is a fact, that the Tallahassee region literally teems with quail; and our friends found them at their best. Up to their twentieth bird neither had missed. On his twenty-first Cauthorne failed;

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and Vance, after waiting to see if the bird was hit, fired, and cut it down at sixty yards, thus doing what, in field-parlance, is known as "wiping the eye" of one's competitor.

"It was the fault of the loading of your shell, sir," said Vance, bowing apologetically: "it scattered the shot too widely."

"You are too generous," replied Cauthorne with a smile. "It was a failure to cover the bird, or rather to allow for flight: I aimed too far ahead of it."

"I did not like the sound of the shell, nevertheless," insisted Vance: "it was a dead, puffy report."

They were now on a high, windy hill,—there are so many such in the region,—and were wading knee-deep in thin gray weeds. The birds were springing up, singly, or two or three together, and with swift flight were swinging over the brow of the hill, and plunging into a thicket in the ravine below. It required quick work to hit them. Cauthorne saw that he for once had met more than his match with the gun. The ease with which Vance covered the spōng game was comparable to nothing but

the finest exhibitions of Paine or Carver. As yet he had not so much as winged a bird. Every one had dropped short off from its flight, stopped dead on the instant of his firing. Cauthorne missed again, a very difficult bird which got up behind him, and to his right, flying low, and whisking behind a tall tuft of briars just as he drew trigger. Vance could have killed it, but did not try. He only turned to Cauthorne, and said, —

“ You ought not to have risked that. It was not fair to you.”

Of course Cauthorne admitted to himself that he was beaten ; but the reader is respectfully asked to recall an instance where any man ever directly and orally confessed his inferiority to any other living or dead man, when it came to a test of marksmanship. There is always somewhere to lay the blame of defeat so as not to touch the skill of the defeated party. Cauthorne thought of a thousand reasons why he had not done better, but he could see no special reason why Vance had done so well. He did not know that he was pitted against the best shot in Florida, which would mean the best in America, or the world.

When their shells were all expended, and they were trudging back to the plantation house loaded with game, a single quail sprang from a tuft of grass at their feet, and went whizzing away in a straight line from them. Quick as thought Vance snatched a small pistol from a back pocket, levelled it, and fired. To Cauthorne's utter amazement, the bird fell : he turned, and looked his astonishment.

Vance smiled.

"I beg pardon," he said : "the pistol is not a gentleman's sporting weapon ; but I assure you I have long used it as such. It must look a little brigandish to you, sir, to see me using it. I hope you are not — not offended."

"No," said Cauthorne ; and then he added with enthusiasm, "You are the finest shot I ever saw. This last was superb."

"Thank you, sir : you are kind to say so much," replied Vance.

They looked at each other as if they were going to shake hands, but they did not.

Willard had reached the house ahead of them. Dinner was ready. It consisted of three courses,—soup and baked bass (bass are

called trout in Florida) ; boiled ham and vegetables and corn-bread ; a big sweet-potato pie, with brandy sauce, and a lemon-custard ; scuppernong wine, coffee. Some of the table-ware attracted Willard's close attention. The plate upon which his wedge of lemon-custard was brought was at least sixty years old, white, decorated in dark indigo-blue. The sauce-jug matched it. A water-pitcher was white, printed with pink. The huge blue platter bearing the ham showed the genuine Wedgwood decoration. The squat sugar-bowl had deep-blue roses on a pale-blue ground. The cream-jug was egg-shell china, decorated with crude pale-green flowers.

"What extremely beautiful old ware you have, Col. Vance ! where did you find it ?" he asked.

"What, these ? Oh ! they are Mr. John's, my man who oversees my freedman renters. I suppose he has picked them up here and there," replied Vance, without exhibiting any interest. "Mr. John lives here, but is not at home to-day. He is down at St. Mark's. He is an excellent man, an old bachelor, a queer

case ; well educated, sir, and a great reader, but queer. He is forever collecting all manner of old things. He some years ago found a pretty well preserved suit of Spanish armor, out here in a field of mine which he was having ploughed unusually deep. He sent it North."

"These pieces are Wedgwood ; that is Adams ware ; this is Hall ; the sugar-bowl I cannot make out ; the cream-jug is of a rare pattern and print, extremely fine," Willard ran on. "All are valuable. That platter is worth a hundred dollars."

He was enthusiastic, but he could get no sympathetic response from Cauthorne and Vance. The latter merely said,—

"I see such things now and then in the negro-cabins,—old odds and ends given to the freedmen by the whites."

In the cool shadows of the evening they retraced their way to Tallahassee ; Col. Vance telling them, as they went along, how this Augustine road was built by one man and his slaves, under a contract with the government, many years ago. Forty thousand dollars was

the price, he thought ; and the man worked about two hundred negroes.

They met, along the road, freedmen returning from Tallahassee to their cabins in the hills. Some of them were walking, some were riding mules ; but the greater number had little carts, to each of which a single ox was harnessed. A few were drunk and noisy. All looked squalid and pinched, or greasy and listless. The driver of the carriage sat upon his high seat, proud and stiff, passing his less fortunate fellows by without a nod or a look. Once, however, he deigned to speak to one. It was at the crossing of the little brook heretofore mentioned as running at the foot of the hill east of the city. As the carriage-horses entered the water at one side, a tipsy negro drove in his one-ox-cart on the other side.

“ Cl’ar de way dar fur de gentlem carriage, yo’ lazy goober-grabbler ! ” shouted the aristocrat. “ What fo’ yo’ stop dar ! Whip up dat calf, an’ git to yo’ place. I got no time ter fool wid you ! ”

The gentlemen in the carriage smiled at each other. They had seen such things in a higher walk of life.

The sun was quite down long before they reached the city ; but a rosy flush still lingered in the west as they whirled along the level top of the Capitol hill.

Cauthorne got out at the hotel, and went to his room deeply impressed with the day's history. He thought it would be good material.

CHAPTER XII.

CAUTHORNE GETS INTO GREEN PASTURE.

THE party at Judge La Rue's was at first spoken of by its projectors as a mere little gathering-together of a few friends in an informal way; but the judge and Col. Vance held a council,—they were always holding councils; and as the legislature was on the point of adjourning, and as there were some important matters, nearly affecting Col. Vance's political desires, not quite made secure, it was thought proper to enlarge the bounds and increase the formalities of the social affair to the full extent of Tallahassee precedents. For a day or two the preparations went quietly but vigorously on. Some innovations were indulged: among them a hundred or so of Chinese lanterns were brought from Jacksonville, to be hung in the trees on the grounds. The

old house was shaken up and renovated, so to speak, its windows and doors thrown open from roof to basement. Floral decorations were used unsparingly.

Willard, furtively alert, watched the proceedings with a curious eye. Lucie fluttered about like a bird,—a very stately young bird,—leaving wherever she went a trace of her fine sense of the fitness of colors and arrangement. No professional florist was called in. The household relied upon itself for every thing. There was made a united, systematic effort to cast poverty into the darkest corners for the time being, and to bring out something like the old splendor where the lights were strongest. A dozen or so of colored maids and youths were collected for servants, and carefully advised of their duties.

Col. Vance came every day, but, greatly to Willard's comfort, did not pay much attention to Lucie. Political intrigue seemed to be rife among the legislators. A carpet-bagger of great ability, and utterly unscrupulous, was striving to sow the seeds of discontent in the dominant party, with a view to planting him-

self in the Senate of the United States two years hence. If this scheme should succeed, it would effectually destroy Vance's chance for the governorship. His only hope lay in holding his friends together on the measures about to be acted upon. Judge La Rue, though old, was a power. His whole life had been given to moulding the political and social action of Tallahassee and the State. The real though well-disguised object of the party about to be given was to call together a number of the legislative magnates under the judge's roof, with a view to influencing them in a certain direction. Of course Lucie did not dream of this phase of the affair ; and, if her aunt was in the secret, she did not let fall a hint of it.

Willard, by a very natural though rather egotistical mistake, took it for granted that the party was, in a way, meant to do him honor as a guest ; and, on this score, the little ingenious turns with which Lucie overcame ugly obstacles in the way of her preparations challenged his deepest admiration. Not that he was so supremely selfish : he associated himself with Lucie as a true man will associate himself

with a lovely girl, in a way too tenderly reverent to deserve criticism. He even bore a hand in the final touches of preparation, giving valuable suggestions respecting the hanging of the gay lanterns, and the arrangement of certain improvised seats for the so-called lawn. Late in the afternoon of the last day, when all was done, he called Lucie to come and sit by him on one of these seats.

"You must be tired, with all your running here and there. Come and tell me who is to be here to-night, and how one is expected to behave. It has been months since I was at a party, and I begin to feel rusty." He said this in such an easy, matter-of-fact way, that Lucie was at a loss how to answer him. He crossed his feet, and, leaning slightly backward, gazed up into the dusky foliage overhead, one arm hanging over the back of the seat. He was a graceful fellow; and his trim, neatly-clothed form was always shown to good effect.

"I am not tired," said Lucie, taking the space beside him; "but I confess to some anxiety. I have not told you, but this is to be my first party."

"Oh, your *début*, your coming out!" said Willard, turning his indescribably genial eyes quickly upon her. "How are you going to dress?"

"You make light of me. I am too old for a *débutante*. I meant to say that this is the first party we have given since—since the war; or, at least, on so considerable a scale. I feel quite incompetent."

"Oh! you've nothing to do but to meet the guests at the door, and help your aunt smile," he said, in his light, ready way. "I'll lighten your burthen all I can by obtruding myself in every manner possible."

She laughed a little: she never laughed much. The Southerners are not a laughing people. It is this that gives much of the dignity for which they are noted. They are witty, not humorous, with a decided aversion for any thing like hysterical expression of delight or anger. In the North everybody smiles, nearly everybody laughs, upon the slightest provocation. So often these smiles are thin and meaningless, caught in a network of weary wrinkles; the laugh is rarely genuine, except in rustic circles.

The evening shadows began to fall. One of the servant-boys went around lighting the lanterns. Soon the gray old house was transformed. It looked like a palace. The dense foliage, the gnarled boughs, and long moss, caught something from the colored lights which added to their charm. The wind seemed to be wandering about indefinitely, swaying things very gently in all directions.

Willard went up to his room to dress. Presently the guests would be arriving.

Col. Vance and Cauthorne came early, the very first, and together. Since the day with the quails they had been great friends. Willard saw them from his window, and went down. His first thought was: What a handsome fellow Cauthorne is, and what a striking couple he and Miss Lucie La Rue would be!

And now, as if in answer to a preconcerted signal, the guests came pouring in. It was something worth while in Tallahassee to go to a party at the La Rue place. The older ones of the best class of inhabitants remembered the *ante-bellum* gatherings there, and the younger ones had heard the older ones tell about them.

Many persons were startled by being invited. It was a very late-coming recognition. This part had been managed by Col. Vance. The house filled, the grounds filled. It was, to both Willard and Cauthorne, a beautiful and in some regards a novel spectacle. It was, to their minds, typical. It was not only characteristic of the climate and people: it was a striking index and exponent of a stage of social change, of which the artist and the novelist had much need. Some of the older ladies appeared in superb toilets, slightly changed in details from those of twenty years ago. Even the young girls, many of them, were habited in sweetly picturesque dresses of antiquated stuffs, the gowns of their mothers and grandmothers made over in the latest fashion-plate style. The elder Miss La Rue knew all these dresses. She had seen them in the good old times, when Herman Willard senior used to be the life of cotillion-parties much more select than this upon which his son was so complacently but interestedly gazing.

A large number of straight, stately old men were present, bowing low to the ladies, and

talking with an ease and elegance scarcely found elsewhere. The young men were mostly tall, almost lean, and sunburned; but they bore themselves in the style of their fathers, with a high head and a courtly formality of look and gesture which brought a frequent smile to Willard's lips and eyes.

The music was good; but the colored violinists and flute-players would now and then fall into a barbaric strain, and shake out their notes in something like jig-time, with much bowing of woolly heads and rapt upturning of shining white eyes.

The night air was cool, but not disagreeable; the windows were all open; fans fluttered as though it were midsummer.

Col. Arthur Vance went among the thronging guests, according to each one some special favor of his wit, making each one feel that the choicest tidbit had been cast to him or her. To the old men in ancient broadcloth dress-coats and white vests, he was particularly and deferentially polite; to the plump, middle-aged ladies he showed great attention; to the young men he was jovially stately in his address; and

to the young ladies he was knightly in his admiring gentleness and grace.

Cauthorne, who always seized what the gods gave him, let no opportunity pass to enjoy Lucie's presence and companionship. She was at her loveliest. Her dress elsewhere, and under different circumstances, might have been open to criticism; but it was beautiful, and gave full play to her style of beauty. It was an indescribable old brocaded white satin, trimmed in old lace. It was a family treasure, dating back many years. She had a necklace of pearls, white and black alternating, which was clasped with a curious red-amber seal in front. Her black hair was arranged low upon her forehead, and coiled just above her neck behind, with a scarlet flower or two for contrast. The excitement of the occasion had given an under-glow to her cheeks, showing through the soft Southern skin like mild, smouldering sun-heat through a morning mist. Cauthorne walked with her for a heavenly minute or two under the trees, in the light of the lanterns. She had thrown a small scarlet shawl around her neck and over her head.

Her deep, sweet eyes shone upon him with bewildering power. Willard came meeting them with a laughing, shapely blonde upon his arm. He darted a keen glance at Cauthorne. The girl was exquisitely dressed in some clinging blue stuff, and bore herself as one used to society, and honestly confident of herself.

When they had passed, "Who is the young lady?" Cauthorne asked.

"It is Miss Cornell, of Indianapolis, Ind.," said Lucie: "isn't she beautiful!"

"Yes, a handsome girl; but I like your style better." He said this in such a matter-of-fact way, with not even a flattering intonation, that she was not troubled.

"Oh! I suppose that is because so many Northern girls are fair," she replied, in the same tone.

"I don't know. There are dark girls and dark girls,—brunettes and brunettes," he said; "but you are not exactly dark or a brunette."

"I certainly am not a blonde," she said naively.

If Willard had been in Cauthorne's place, he

would have wrung in some extremely clever fancy or other. But the fair-haired, stalwart novelist was not a sentimentalist in his talk. He was more a brusque soldier, a business-like war-correspondent, a plain, strong, rather peculiar man. He suddenly changed the subject.

"You find my friend Willard a charming fellow, of course," said he, stopping before a rustic seat, as if tempted to accept its offer of comfort.

"Yes: he knows so much, has been to so many places, is so ready to impart nice gleams of his knowledge. I like him very, very much, indeed."

Cauthorne tried, but he could not read her face. It was placid, and sweet, and warm, and sincere, and bewilderingly lovely; but he could not go below its surface. She was either very wise, or very simple and natural, or both; or neither.

Her duties called her away too soon. She left him standing in the flickering lantern-light, gazing steadfastly at the spot where she had been. A sleepy mocking-bird was twittering

its night-song somewhere down in the farther tangles of the grove.

Willard with Miss Cornell found himself quite at ease. She was what all well-educated Western girls are, very interesting and very amusing, ready to express her opinions, good-natured, sweet-voiced, strong in body and mind. She had been a month in Tallahassee, she said, and her round-trip ticket was about expiring. She would go home next week. She liked Tallahassee, found it really delightful, but would prefer Jacksonville or Fernandina, on account of society.

“Do you not like the society here?” said Willard, betrayed by her frankness into asking such a question.

“Oh, yes, indeed! but there is so little of the *chic* and movement of the other places here. I don’t care to dream away every day in the week. I like life that lives, and sings, and laughs. At Jacksonville and Fernandina one meets Northern people at every turn, and all is wakefulness and activity.”

“But one misses the genuine old Southern spirit, and—and—flavor, so to speak,” suggested Willard.

"Very true; but, after all, one can well afford to miss those things now, don't you think?"

Willard hesitated for a moment before responding, then he said,—

"The men here are not so clever and interesting to you, then, as the women are to me. I find the Southern girl charming beyond expression."

"Yes, Miss Lucie La Rue is," she quickly rejoined; "but all the girls are not Lucie La Rues, by any means."

"But the young men?" he insisted.

"Oh! I am not critical or ill-natured, I hope; but if one could get them to be less stilted and over-polite! They speak to one as if they feared their breath would blow one away. When I was in Boston"—

Just then a tall, dark young fellow with a drooping mustache came to claim her for the dance. He bowed very low, with his hand on his breast, murmured lower, and with the air of a king led her away. Willard was profoundly amused.

Judge La Rue was an alert and diplomatic

host. He managed to come near being everywhere at once, but without any suggestion of haste or effort. He held little side conferences with members of the legislature. In talking to them he arched his gray eyebrows, and made graceful gestures with his long, sinewy hands. To certain legislators, who were suspected of backsliding from the good old faith, he was especially attentive, taking wine with them, one at a time, in a niche of the dining-room, and taking hold of each one's arm in a lofty, familiar way.

Young La Rue stood leaning on his crutches, a silent, rather gloomy, and wholly pathetic picture, taking little part in the affair. He had left all his real self upon the field of Chickamauga with his leg, the fingers of his left hand, and four brothers who fell there.

The elder Miss La Rue was quite as ubiquitous as her brother, and even more successful as a manager, for she possessed the gift of smiling very sweetly. She said "my dear," and "dear child" to the young ladies, she talked of the past with the elderly ones. Late in the evening, Vance came to her, and murmured in her ear,—

"Can't you manage Forseythe of Escambia? He's a little cool. That carpet-bagger has been tampering with him. I can't afford to lose him: he's a man of influence."

"I will try," she replied, and passed on. Soon after she might have been seen leaning upon the arm of the gentleman from Escambia, and adroitly, by indirection, appealing to his State pride.

"If you would like to see an exhibition of suppressed emotion," said Miss Cornell, as she stood apart with Cauthorne, "real ultra Southern emotion, just say to one of these old gentlemen that you think the seat of the State government will soon be removed from Tallahassee to Jacksonville or Gainesville. I inadvertently tried it on Judge La Rue just now."

"And with disastrous result?" demanded Cauthorne.

"I fear so: he rubbed his hands together, and looked troubled away back behind his smile and his polite reply."

Later in the evening Cauthorne found himself looking down upon a thin, dark, vivacious girl, a Miss Morey, whose father had just

arranged a large contract with the State. She was *petite*, intelligent, witty, smart. She waltzed like a little whirlwind. She talked without effort. She was dying to go North for a season. She longed for Long Branch and Brighton Beach and White Mountains. Her papa had half promised her she might go next summer. Cauthorne recognized a freshness, a newness, about her, not in consonance with her present surroundings. She had nothing of that lofty sweetness of the other Tallahassee girls. Afterwards he accidentally discovered that before the war her father was a poor miller, and that he owed his present power to some successful trading within the last few years. The family was not aristocratic. Their presence at the judge's mansion upon such an occasion as this was due to political exigencies. Her father was a strong supporter of Col. Vance's measures. He was here to-night, in shiny broadcloth and sleek hair, buttonholing the legislators in behalf of those very measures. Her mother — an uneducated, tall, bony woman, dressed in something trimmed in orange — showed conspicuously among the

groups of graceful dames, as she wandered aimlessly from place to place.

Cauthorne exchanged Miss Morey for Lucie La Rue at last; and it came into his mind to recall the funny little mistake she had one day made in bowing to him for an acquaintance.

"Oh, you ought to have forgotten that! I must have appeared very rude," she said, plucking a white flower as they passed near a vase. "You would hate me forever if you knew what I thought when I bowed."

"You make it too strong," he said, smiling down upon her from his great height. "I must insist on being put to the test. You must tell me just what you thought."

"You really demand it?"

"Yes, earnestly."

"I am afraid," she said, tipping the flower against her straight, high-bred nose, and glancing slantwise up into his face.

He stopped, and faced her.

"Now," he said, "I cannot wait. Tell me now."

"I thought you were Mr. Stephens,—that

old, old gentleman who stands by papa yonder."

Cauthorne looked, and laughed. Mr. Stephens was not only tall, white-haired, and old: he was also very ugly.

A number of old negroes, men and women, who had been trusted servants of the La Rue household in slavery days, had come to look on, as had been their privilege in that happier time. Auntie Liza, leaning on her staff, was prominent. She kept up a running comment, addressed to her companions, as she gazed.

"Chillen," she said, "'tain't no use a-talkin'. Dish'er's jis like ole times, on'y not half like 'em. When I was a gal an' we had parties, dey wus parties to kill, dey wus. I wus up-stairs dressin' waiter; and de Lor', chillen, de dia-mon's an' de gole an de purrels an' de rubies dey dazzled yo' eyes; an' de silks an' de satins and de velvet — bress de good Lor'! Ole Feginny wus moas like hebben!"

Cauthorne made a note of these dark on-lookers, ranged in lines and groups on the edge of the night, where the flaring of the lanterns was softened into gloom; and he thought they

added the most telling touch to the picture. They looked like accentuation points, or strokes of emphasis, dashed on the margin of the scene. Or they might be compared to the advance-guard of a benighted people halted in hesitating wonder in the twilight on the threshold of civilization and enlightenment.

A blare of brassy music, the tramping of many feet, suddenly reached the ears of the merry-makers at La Rue place. It was soon whispered around that the carpet-bagger had organized a counter meeting, and the negroes, with a band and drums, were parading the streets. Then the shadowy figures on the verge of the lawn faded away. They had gone to join their color.

Willard did one thing which was very wrong : he knew it was wrong all the time. He kept secreted about him a little sketch-block of light brown paper. Furtively he now and then slipped this out ; and, screened by a door or a tall pot of flowers or a curtain, he made a pencil caper over its surface. The result was some studies in bold lines, of many of the most striking figures and groups of the even-

ing. The notes of the ladies and their drapery were invaluable. He did not spare Lucie. He made four or five sketches of her, such as he could dash off in thirty seconds or so, strikingly life-like and expressive. The stately dames, and tall, trim old men, the girls in semi-antiquated gowns, all came in for a study. When the guests had gone, and he sat in his room by a window smoking a cigarette before going to bed, he looked over these sketches with great self-complacency.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GUITAR.

THE next day Col. Vance and Cauthorne called together at La Rue place. They found Lucie and Willard on two of the rustic seats near the house, evidently well content to be thus whiling away the delightful afternoon. In fact, Willard had been in an artistic mood, and had begged the privilege of doing what he termed arranging an æsthetic symphony with Lucie as the central idea. He draped the seat first in the tender green-gray Spanish moss.

"Now lean half-wearily back," he said. Then he placed a blue footstool in the foreground, and flung a scarlet mantilla over the arm of the seat. Her white dress and dull-red ribbons completed the combination.

"You work up charmingly in a picture," he said, stepping back a few paces, and looking at her with half-closed eyes.

The sensation of being thus sincerely appreciated in a new way was to Lucie a most fascinating thing. She had felt it several times since Willard had been in the household.

"Wait a moment," he said. He went to his room, and came back with a small oval fan, gray, with scarlet border, and a white lily for its centre. "Hold that."

She took it. A little glow had gathered in her cheeks. Her lips were like a babe's in their tenderness and brilliancy. Her dark gray eyes were deeper and darker than ever.

Another thought struck him. He fetched from the grand parlor an old, curious guitar, and leaned it against her chair.

"That rounds up the thought," he exclaimed, clasping his hands, and smiling like a big, pleased boy.

"Now don't move till I have done a sketch of you," he added, hastily taking up some drawing materials and arranging them. His palette seemed mostly laid already. He fell rapidly to work, as one who knows just how to utilize every second of a precious space of time. With a fine-pointed pencil he traced in the

whole ; then, from the little blotches of moist water-colors on his palette, he began laying on the colors, taking water from a wide-mouthed phial.

Lucie sat there in a sort of dream, and she looked like the embodiment of the most glorious dream that ever came to man.

It was a miniature drawing he was making. He was a brilliant and rapid workman. Incredibly soon he had done.

The sketch-book lay open at his feet, and the palette was drying beside it, when Vance and Cauthorne arrived. He was in the midst of a monologue, meant to explain to her the difference between Northern and Southern girls, as he viewed them.

"Now, you," he was saying, "are a perfect type of the ultra beautiful, ultra Southern girl."

She was about to reply when they saw the young men coming up the walk between the oaks.

Willard shook hands with his friends, and was about to resume his seat, when a look of Vance's led him to stoop quickly, gather up the

painting materials and the sketch, and carry them away to his room. At the time he did not think of analyzing the stare of surprise which he had seen in Vance's face. It impressed him with force, however; and when he returned he could not help noticing a constraint and stiffness not at all usual.

Lucie seemed unaware of this, and was in excellent spirits, talking more, and with more than her accustomed freedom.

"Mr. Willard has been using me as a part of a harmony," she said, with one of her rare, sweet smiles, "and has tried to explain to my untutored mind the elements of a symphony in colors, or something of the sort. He hurried the examples away when you came, however, and I suspect it was a failure."

"No," exclaimed Willard, "not a failure. It is the most perfect sketch I ever made. It *is* a symphony of the purest order."

Col. Vance looked at him steadily and quietly while he was speaking, an indescribable smile on his finely-formed mouth.

"May I see it?" he demanded, in a voice strangely flat and unmusical.

"Oh! some time, perhaps," said Willard lightly, "when I am in an exhibiting mood."

"I will see it *now*, if you please," said Vance.

Lucie darted a startled look at him as he spoke. Neither Cauthorne nor Willard noticed it. The latter filliped an old acorn with his thumb, and said,—

"I am too lazy to be troubled now. Any other time in the world."

"I saw you sketching last night."

Willard looked up quickly, coloring just perceptibly. Vance's tone was not to be mistaken. Nor was Willard's look.

Lucie took up the guitar, and swept its strings with her fingers. She rapidly tuned it.

"I am going to sing a song," she said. A great white smile flared over her face. Col. Vance got up, and turned himself about a time or two. He looked up into the trees. He snapped his thumb and fingers together audibly. He took a few quick steps back and forth. Then, "Excuse me," he said, slipping out his watch, and glancing at it, "I had forgotten. I've a matter of importance. I will explain when I can. Good-afternoon."

He strode rapidly away. Lucie fingered the strings of the guitar a little. One of them snapped in two with a great clang. She looked up as if in despair.

"So ends the symphony," gayly exclaimed Cauthorne, in the innocence of his ignorance.

Willard took the guitar, and began to examine to see if the string would admit of tying. He mended the break in silence, and handed the instrument back to Lucie. For a mere point of time their eyes met, and the light of their common thought flashed between them.

"There is a little song," said Cauthorne, "which charmed me the other evening. Two gentlemen sang it in the hotel-parlor. It is called 'The Tallahassee Girl,' or something of the sort."

"A silly ditty, but rather sweet. I will sing it for you," said Lucie, rapidly running the mended string up to the proper pitch. Her hands were very steady.

Willard looked curiously at her, his admiration deepening with every breath.

She dashed into the lively prelude, and at length began singing. Her voice could not be

called cultivated ; but it was a soprano of wonderful power and sweetness, and there was a feeling in it which transformed the ditty into a song. Before it was ended Willard had passed a crisis in his life. He had asked himself the question, Do I love her ? and immediately, with a leap of his heart, had answered, I do !

Cauthorne staid a long while, keeping Lucie playing most of the time. He enjoyed every moment to the full ; and, when at last he got up to go, he lingered.

"I want to come often : may I ?" he said, holding out his hand to bid her good-by in the good Southern fashion.

As soon as he was gone, Lucie sank back in the seat, pale, almost overcome. Now, indeed, she made a wonderful picture, caught in those gay colors.

Willard waited for her to speak. He pretended not to notice her excitement. It was not long she remained silent. Suddenly raising her head, —

"Col. Vance is very angry," she said ; "and I fear you will have trouble. I know you will."

"What is the matter with the man?" demanded Willard very composedly.

"I really cannot tell, but I think it was the picture. He was in a white rage as soon as he saw it," she said. "Was there any thing very — was there any thing at all wrong about it in any way? Tell me, tell me!" she cried in a sudden paroxysm of emotion.

"Upon my sacred honor, no!" answered Willard.

She rose, pressed her palms against her temples, and turned to go into the house. She faltered, looked back at him, and said, —

"I must have time to think. Excuse me."

He did not try to detain her. To him all this grand emotion, while it was dramatic and picturesque, seemed almost ludicrously disproportioned to its cause. He had forgotten where he was. Not even the long moss, the magnolias, the mocking-birds, and the guitar could call to his mind the fact that he was in the old, hot, imperious, semi-mediæval South. He was, however, imperfectly aware of an impending quarrel with Col. Vance, and of all the disagreeable things which might connect them-

selves with it. Viewed from his standpoint, it merely took the turn of a disagreement, a misunderstanding, a coolness, nothing further. Fighting was no part of the age in which Wil-lard lived. He had never viewed a personal encounter as a possibility on his plane. Such a thing was far below his horizon. He cor-rectly suspected that Vance had construed his action, in hurrying the sketch away to his room, to mean that he intended to keep it. But his æsthetic nature could discover no im-propriety, no suggestion of harm, no shadow of insult, in such an act or intention. He did mean to keep the sketch. Another thought outlined itself in his mind, upon which he felt a scruple. No doubt Vance had suddenly be-gun to suspect that he intended to try and win away Lucie. This presented a moral question fully within his grasp. Ought he to do this if he could? He stopped, be it said to his credit, right in the whirl of the rosy mist of the sweet, powerful passion, and asked the question of himself. His heart was silent. His conscience formulated no intelligible answer. A spell closed around him. The breeze whispered on,

the perfumes crept on, the mocking-birds sang on. He looked abstractedly at the guitar, the blue footstool, the festooned seat, the scarlet mantilla, a tiny glove. The sky above, the earth beneath, and all the space between them were filled with the influence of Lucie La Rue. He reached his arms toward the empty seat, and murmured, "You are mine, sweet Lucie, mine!"

He was not aware that she was close beside him, until she said, —

"Mr. Willard."

CHAPTER XIV.

COL. VANCE AND CAUTHORNE ARGUE THE QUESTION.

WHEN Cauthorne left La Rue place, he went directly to the hotel. He met Col. Vance, who was walking to and fro on the veranda, and immediately noticed that something had gone wrong with him. The Southerner's dark face was darker, and his eyes sterner, than usual. He carried himself stiffly erect, walking with something of a military strut. Taking Cauthorne's arm he said,—

“I desire a few words in private with you, sir.”

“Certainly,” replied Cauthorne: “come into my room.”

They went into the hall, in the brick part of the hotel, turned down the first corridor to the left, and entered the second room on the left-hand side. This particularity of description is

for the benefit of those who will visit Tallahassee, and stop at the old hotel. This room has a large window looking into the Capitol grounds. It has a small fireplace, and a queer little black wooden mantle. It has an inner door giving into another room north.

When they were seated, Cauthorne produced a box of cigars, and matches.

"Now," said he, "I am quite ready for your confidential communications."

He said this lightly, thinking Vance had some matters to put into print, or to keep out of print, touching his legislative schemes.

"Your friend Willard is no gentleman, is he?" began Vance.

Cauthorne was lighting a cigar. He dropped the match, and turned his astounded face full upon his companion, with a suddenness that exaggerated his apparent excitement.

"I do not mean to hurt your feelings," Vance added quickly, in a conciliatory tone, and leaning toward Cauthorne: "I want you to know that I esteem you as a gentleman in every way. But this man Willard"—

"Is your equal in every respect, socially,

intellectually, morally, and pecuniarily," exclaimed Cauthorne in a dry, firm tone. "What do you desire to say of him?"

It was Vance's turn to be astounded. In the arrogance of his jealousy and wounded pride, he had taken it for granted that Cauthorne would understand at a glance how utterly, preposterously presumptuous Willard had been in daring to carry a sketch of Lucie La Rue to his room. He had never dreamed that any man would for a moment presume to do such a thing.

Out of such trivial affairs all the duels, or nearly all, in high life, used to come in the South. It had one good effect: it made men very careful in matters of love. Great circumspection was required to be used by the knightly youth who went courting a Southern maid, else he might get entangled in an affair of honor for nothing more heinous than a few delicate attentions. Even worse things than duels used to occur,—dreadful street-fights between young men of the first families, when knives and pistols would snap and flash, and blood and life flow out freely.

Vance did not speak immediately. He had not wished to wound Cauthorne. In fact, he very much desired to retain him as a friend. It was not ugly selfishness that prompted this feeling: it was a genuine esteem which had suddenly developed, due in a certain degree, no doubt, to Cauthorne's strenuous efforts in behalf of his political measures, but more largely owing to Cauthorne's gentle strength of character and ready comradeship, his great knowledge of men and things, and his forthright honesty in expressing his opinions.

"We need not go and have trouble with each other," Vance said at last. "I like you: you have shown yourself a gentleman, sir, and a true friend. It was to avoid a falling-out with you that I sought this interview. I knew Willard was your friend"—

"Then you should have been more guarded in your language to me in speaking of him," said Cauthorne bluntly.

Vance bit his lip, and slowly rolled a cigar between his thumb and fingers.

"It is an awkward thing to talk about," he presently said. "I wanted to tell you that Willard and I cannot get on together."

Cauthorne well knew that here was a quarrel about a sweetheart, but he did not even dimly suspect the immediate excuse for the trouble.

"Well," he said, "what is the matter between you and Willard?"

Vance suddenly recognized the difficulty of making explanation. A man in love is a child, and usually a very silly child. Novelists and poets and dramatists have tried to elevate the lover to the level of the hero: the trial has been a failure. The thing cannot be done. The details of any genuine courtship would damn any novel, poem, or play. A honeymoon in print would be a sort of sugar-coated Mother Goose. If a man loves a girl, he will get mad and fight if another man loves her, especially if, in the first instance, he is a Southern man.

"Mr. Willard's treatment of Miss La Rue is—is—his manner is—he—damn it! I do not like the way he is doing! That's the whole of it," exclaimed Vance.

Cauthorne laughed outright. He saw only the ludicrous side. Vance's situation did not touch his sympathy. As soon as he could leave off laughing, he said,—

"I have not heard Miss La Rue complaining. She seems very happy."

Vance leaped to his feet like a tiger. He was aflame with anger.

"What do you mean, sir?" he cried, his voice husky and thin.

"There is no doubt about my meaning," was the mild response. "Miss La Rue has the right to dismiss Willard from the house, and from her mind, if she chooses."

"But I"—began Vance.

"But you," interrupted Cauthorne, "have no right to make the first objection. Miss La Rue seems thoroughly capable of taking care of herself. If she prefers Willard to you"—

It was now Vance's turn to break in.

"But she doesn't," he exclaimed.

"Well, then, what are you going on so about?" said Cauthorne. "If she prefers you, Willard is the one who will suffer, not you."

"What right has he to be making portraits of her, and—and taking them away to his room?" cried Vance.

"Maybe she allowed him to. She didn't look very angry," said Cauthorne, recalling the

little scene on the lawn. "She seemed in a charming good-humor."

Vance grabbed his long black mustache as if he would pull it out. He stared at the floor. He was very pale.

Cauthorne scratched a match, and lighted a cigar. It was Northern phlegm *versus* Southern egotism.

"And all this great anger of yours has no solider cause than that a Northern artist has dared to paint a Tallahassee girl!" continued Cauthorne, in his merciless matter-of-fact tone.

"He has taken advantage of the judge's hospitable kindness, and Miss La Rue's lack of worldly knowledge, and has been bewildering her with his infernal high-art nonsense," said Vance savagely; "and has finally secured her picture to put it on sale in some New York or Boston gallery."

"Well?" said Cauthorne, his face as quiet as that of a sphinx.

"No man shall live to do such a thing," Vance hissed.

"You will murder Willard, then?"

"I will fight him."

"But he will not fight. He is a peaceful artist, to whom the idea of spilling a man's life-blood would be hideous."

"I will *make* him fight," declared Vance with great emphasis.

"But you cannot," said Cauthorne, coolly puffing his cigar-smoke.

"I will show you," rejoined Vance imperiously.

"I will put it differently, then: you *shall* not," said Cauthorne; and, as he spoke, he rose to his feet, confronted his companion, and gazed steadily into his eyes.

"You call yourself a gentleman, and you are when you are free from this hereditary tendency to homicide," Cauthorne continued; "but you are no more a gentleman at this moment than a tiger is a gentleman. You are a brutal murderer just now, and you know you are. Do you suppose I'll let you go out of this room to kill my friend?"

"Stand out of my way, sir," said Vance, putting back his hand as if to get a pistol or a knife. It was the old Southern style.

Cauthorne sprang upon him like a lion, and

in a second had disarmed him and dashed him forcibly into a chair.

"Sit there, colonel, until you have cooled off," he said, in a sort of growling way.

Vance strove with all his power; but that stalwart, determined two hundred pounds of bone and muscle proved too much for his slender frame to struggle against.

"I'm not in the least angry, colonel," muttered Cauthorne; "but I'll break every bone in your body if you don't come to your senses. If you force me to strike you, I'll give you what the boys in the English army used to term a 'beastly deadener.' Not another move, now!"

Cauthorne had not taken the cigar from his mouth, but was talking with it compressed between his teeth. He held Vance's pistol in his left hand.

Some one rapped at the door.

"You keep still now: there's a visitor, and I don't want this business made public, neither do you." Saying which, Cauthorne went and opened the door.

A messenger entered with a telegram. Cauthorne glanced at the superscription.

"It is for you," he said, handing it to Vance, who broke it open and hastily read it.

"My father is dying at Hot Springs, Ark.," he exclaimed. He hurriedly took out his watch. "I can barely make the train."

Cauthorne stepped aside to let him pass out of the room, and said,—

"Here is your pistol. Use it on birds," giving him the weapon.

Vance went away looking extremely haggard.

CHAPTER XV.

A SKETCH AND A FAN.

WILLARD turned quickly, recovering himself as from a dream, when Miss Lucie La Rue spoke his name so close to his ear. She was looking at him in a proud, hurt, appealing way.

"Will you do me a favor?" she said.

"Any you may ask," he replied.

"Bring me the picture, the sketch you made of me."

"Certainly, if you desire it."

"I do desire it very, very much."

"Right away?" he asked, unconsciously falling into a Southernism.

"Yes, sir, if you please."

"I hope you are not angry," he said, delaying.

"No, oh no! but I am right, which is much better. Don't you think I am?"

"Perhaps so: I am slow to think you ever could be wrong. But be frank with me, Miss La Rue: why should he—why should Col. Vance control this thing?"

Her face reddened, and she stood a moment in silence. She held her head a little higher, and her lips trembled slightly as she said,—

"Will you be kind enough to fetch the picture now?"

He went immediately, and without another word. He was gone a long time. She waited impatiently, idly straying around on a little space of the lawn, her hands crossed in front of her, and her eyes bent upon the ground. In one hand, all unconsciously, she still held the little fan that Willard had brought to her. When she chanced to notice this she let it fall as if it had been a dangerous thing; but she stooped and picked it up again, just as he came down the steps with the sketch.

"I will exchange with you," she said, with a poor little smile, holding out the fan in one hand, and reaching to take the sketch with the other.

"It hurts me," he said: "it gives me a real pang."

They both hesitated, half offering, half withdrawing. Their eyes met in a way which caused them both to wonder, there had come such a change, and so quickly.

"I would give it to you if my life went with it," continued Willard, holding the sketch farther toward her. It was an extravagant assertion, but at such a time it had the force of reality. It was as though he offered his life.

"But you must not think me mean," she said: "I do not wish to be unkind, or give you pain."

"I know, I know," he said. "It is what lies behind it all that cuts so keenly. I cannot bear it."

She did not understand him. Her face, in expressing perplexity, was so unique and so beautiful a study that the subject of their conversation faded from his mind. His love for her leaped up like a flame.

"Lucie, Miss La Rue," he continued, so soon as he again returned to himself, "how is this to end? Do you see? Have I any right to consideration? Is he every thing? Must I go at the wave of his hand?"

"Now you are bitter," she responded: "you do not consider. There are differences of custom. He did not like for you to have my picture. He did not think it proper."

"Oh! but he would think proper for *him* to have one. He is an exception."

"Mr. Willard, give me the"—

"Certainly: here, pardon me."

She almost snatched the sketch, and ran up the steps with it; but she immediately returned, holding out the fan.

"I was acting unfairly, keeping both," she said, again essaying to smile, which enhanced her look of embarrassment.

"Keep it: I am going away—going home," he murmured huskily.

"Oh, no! you must not, it would"—

"Immediately," he said, "I must go at once. I came too late, I have staid too long. Lucie, Lucie, I love you, and I must go!" His voice had in it an infinitude of tender, hopeless trouble. He held out both hands. It was a fine picture they made, the lithe, strong, fair young man, and the dark, graceful, splendid girl, as they stood facing each other. The charm of

youth, the magnetic power of personal beauty, and the influence of that indescribable element of sympathy which leaps from heart to heart at such a time, held them as if on tiptoe. And the wind blew gently, swaying the long moss and dark sprays of the oaks. The perfume of jasmine came, the mocking-birds sang, the lazy warmth of the semi-tropic crept along from the west, where the sun swung low; the dull old house seemed sleeping.

"No, no, not that," she said, putting her hand toward him, as if to thrust back his words, "you must not say that!"

He strove to read her meaning in her eyes. He bent eagerly forward, bringing his hands closer together.

"Must I go?" he scarcely more than whispered. "Say, Lucie, must I?"

She stood in a faltering attitude. Her color came and went. Her lips moved, but she spoke no word. Then, with a quick, resolute movement, she put the fan on his outstretched hands; and, turning abruptly about, fled into the house.

. Something tinkled on the steps as she passed

over them, and Willard saw her eye-glasses shining where they had fallen. He picked them up, and stood a while holding them. Lucie had used these so furtively that he had scarcely more than suspected her near-sightedness; but he knew they were hers. He had seen them slipped under her scarlet waist-ribbon.

He went up to his room in a dazed, bewildered mood. He tried to shake off the feeling, and be able to see his way clearly, but nothing offered save immediate departure. He looked at his watch. He would barely have time to reach the train. He sat down at the little table, and wrote the following:—

“**MY DEAR FRIEND,**— You will pardon my sudden flight from your house: circumstances of the most imperative nature compel me. I will explain thoroughly when I have leisure.

“Hurriedly, faithfully yours,

“**HERMAN WILLARD, JUN.**

“**TO JUDGE LA RUE.**”

This he left lying on the table. Hastily packing a small valise, and taking the cane Lucie had given him, he left the house, and

made his way to the railway-station just in time for the eastward-going train.

A few minutes after Willard's departure, Lucie received, by a special messenger, the following :—

“DEAR LUCIE,—Just had a telegram that my father is dying at Hot Springs, Ark. I leave on train going east. Will write you.

“Ever yours,
“ARTHUR VANCE.”

It can easily be seen that these two little epistles caused a stir in the quiet old house. Miss La Rue senior was exasperated at Willard, the judge was utterly nonplussed, Lucie was excited but silent. Of course nothing could be done but wait for the explanation.

To Lucie the affair seemed unreal ; and she tried in vain to make it take some explainable shape, so that she could go to her father and her aunt, and tell them the whole of it. Down in her heart there was a great regret like a heavy stone ; there was also a sweet, tender consciousness of a new life, lived for a day, which no mischance could ever wholly drive out.

For two or three days she went softly about the house, a little pale, not inclined to talk.

Cauthorne came to see her. He was greatly surprised when she told him Willard was gone. He could hardly believe it.

"What ever took the boy away in such a hurry?" he exclaimed, more to himself than to her. "Are you sure he has gone back to his home?"

"I know nothing except what his note stated," she said.

"What day did he leave?"

"The day before yesterday, on the evening train."

Cauthorne started.

"Are you sure?" he asked. "On the evening train?"

"I know he must have gone on that train, for he left the house not more than a half-hour before train-time."

"Then he and Col. Vance went on the same train!" said Cauthorne.

"I had not thought of that," she exclaimed, and her face grew very pale.

"Well, I dare say nothing has come of it,"

rejoined Cauthorne after a pause, "or we should have heard of it."

That very evening, after Cauthorne had gone, Lucie received a letter from Col. Vance, written from Montgomery, Ala. He would write again as soon as he reached Hot Springs. He said nothing about having seen Willard.

Strange enough, Cauthorne got a letter from Willard, dated the same as Vance's, and post-marked at Montgomery, in which there was no mention of Vance. It was a relief to know that they had not met and fought. It rolled a great weight from Lucie's heart. She did not smile much; but her eyes were not so sad and heavy, and her step took something of the old quickness and lightness again.

Cauthorne went to La Rue place every day. He spent much time talking over political matters with the old judge. He was doing his utmost to forward Vance's plans in his absence, and this endeared him to the old man and to the elder Miss La Rue. He delved with the legislators, using every art, and, it is to be feared, some artifice, to hold them steadily where he needed them.

When the time came for the ballot on Vance's measures, it was owing to Cauthorne's personal efforts, more than to any other influence extrinsic of the Legislature itself, that they were, after a whole night's struggle, triumphantly pulled through. He immediately telegraphed to Vance as follows:—

"We have won. Your policy has been vindicated. Both bills passed by a small majority. We staid with them all night. We triumphed just as the roosters crowed for day.

"CAUTHORNE."

He received the following reply:—

"A thousand thanks. Let us shake hands over the bloody chasm.

"VANCE."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE TWO GLOOMY PASSENGERS.

THE train on the Jacksonville, Pensacola, and Mobile Railway left Tallahassee on time, and went east at a moderate rate of speed. It wound among the hills for a few miles, through dark red cuts, and over deep, ragged ravines, then whirled out into the level woodlands, where the pines grew tall and straight. Night was coming on, with shadowy mists flickering above the ponds. There was a decided chill in the air. The two passengers, who took to themselves the entire hindmost car, muffled themselves in their light top-coats, drew their hats down over their eyes, and looked gloomy. They seemed to take no note of the scenery through which they were flying. The train sped out on Lake La Fayette, seeming to trundle over the water's surface as on a

glass pavement. Far away on either hand stretched a lily-field, the pads almost covering the lake in places. Here and there rose clumps of bay, cypress, and magnolia, the last on the little tussock islands. Great rafts of ducks, seemingly unmindful of the crashing cars and snorting engine, were dimly seen floating idly on the still water, or swimming gracefully among the stems of the aquatic trees. White herons, standing straight among the bonnets and grasses of the shallows, shone like spots of snow against the dull background. The long moss draped the trees, hanging down and draggling in the water. Having crossed the lake, the train rushed into a densely-timbered swamp, where one might expect to see all manner of horrid reptiles. The under-growth here was like a wall on either hand. The smoke and steam from the locomotive fell heavily, and hung in great fleeces, like grizzled wool, upon the branches and foliage. Flat pine woods came next into view, and then broad plantations, with comfortable houses, and thrifty orchards of peach, pear, and plum trees.

The two passengers sat quite still, one a few seats in front of the other, and on the opposite side of the car. The brakeman, a talkative and rather grimy colored youth, came in now and then, and made pretence of punching the disconsolate fire in the dejected little stove ; but he could get no response to his ejaculatory remarks from these morose travellers. They paid no more attention to him or his talk than they did to the stove and its sputtering bluish flames.

Live-Oak, the station where one must change cars to go towards Montgomery, was reached far in the night. The foremost passenger got up, and silently strode out. The other got up, and silently followed him. Vance led, Willard came after. Neither dreamed of the other's presence.

Here was an hour's delay waiting for the other train. Live-Oak is not a pleasant place for a night-stop. It has a few thieves, a number of bunko men, and some regular cut-throats, who are always hanging around the little station when the night-trains come in. One tall, lank fellow was drunk and dangerous,

wandering around with a knife in his hand, swearing he could carve up any man who did not like him.

"I kin put holes inter any feller 'at ain't my friend faster'n a shoemaker kin drive pegs into 'em," he was saying as Willard passed near him; "an' I kin whoop any thing white er black er yaller atween here an' Savannah, an' I kin crawl any feller's log what disputes it. Whoopee! yere I am!"

This fellow was dressed in the fragments of a suit of butternut jeans. On his head he wore an old white slouch hat, whose brim was five inches wide, and whose crown was a sharp cone. He was lean to emaciation, stringy, angular, thin-bearded, sunken-chested, a regular Cracker ruffian of the most despicable and dangerous sort.

"I 'ud kinder like ter swipe somebody with this 'ere cuttin' utensil o' mine," he continued, stumbling, and nearly falling against Col. Vance. "I 'ud cut a feller half in two at one whack, an' he'd never want no more mermlasses in these 'ere parts. Whoopee! Whoopee! yere I am, Betsy!"

Vance put out his hand, and pushed the man away from him in order to prevent his falling against him.

"I'll jist split ye from yer collar-bone to yer instep!" screamed the Cracker, flourishing his knife, and glaring at Vance. The dim light swinging near the station door brought into dusky, weird relief the form of the miserable, drunken wretch. He was really terrible to see as he toppled and swayed, and gesticulated and swore.

Vance hastily turned away from him, and would gladly have avoided any further contact with him. Such escape was not permissible. This free American citizen of the piny woods of Florida had been insulted.

"You sheved me, did ye? I'll not let no dern man shev me! Yer jest es good es carved up right now!"

Saying this, the crazed bully lunged at Vance with the knife. Willard had approached them at this point. He saw the knife whirling in the air, and the ruffian rushing upon a gentleman. This was enough. He leaped forward, and concentrating all his strength dealt

a straight, powerful blow with his clinched right hand. The would-be murderer tumbled into a harmless heap.

"I hope he didn't touch you with the knife?" Willard said, turning to Vance.

"No, sir; and whom must I thank for this easy deliverance?" responded Vance, turning to his rescuer.

And now their eyes met in the flickering glare of the station light, just as a tardy town officer arrested the reviving bully, and led him away. They evinced surprise. They kept silent for a time. The incident had caused a little commotion among the human night-birds of the vicinity, and five or six of them drew up around the two.

"He knocked ole Jobly sky slantin' an' crooked," remarked one.

"Yes: he hit like er mule er kickin'," said another.

"Does he take sich spells often?" put in a third.

"Didn't do it er purpose er nothin'," a fourth suggested.

"Sometimes there's fust-class fightin' mate-

rial bundled up in a b'iled shirt an' store clothes," was another remark.

"Kinder calculate 'at ole Jobly 'ud sw'ar ter that right now," some one added.

"Ef they'd give ole Jobly a fair chance I'd like ter see any taller-skinned Northern dandy as could tech 'im. This 'ere's a dirty trick, two of 'm a-pilin' onter one ole man."

"S'posen we jes' clean out the party. They're nothin' but a couple o' thievin' Yankees, nohow."

"Twouldn't be a bad scheme."

If the delayed train had not come crashing along just then, with all its light and a crowd of passengers, the two gentlemen might have fared badly. The thieves and roughs slunk back into the darkness to watch for less-guarded prey.

Willard and Vance looked steadily at each other, surprised, askance, evidently troubled about what ought to be said or done.

"All aboard!" shouted the train-conductor, waving his official lantern.

"It was very manly of you, sir," said Vance, bowing to Willard. His voice was constrained,

his manner awkward ; and, before Willard could reply, he turned, and hurried into the already moving train. Willard followed.

They took berths in a sleeping-car through to Montgomery, and saw no more of each other on the way.

Willard did not sleep. It was beginning to dawn upon him, that, like every man who gets madly in love, he had been acting the part of a simpleton. What a weak, silly childish thing he had done in thus running away from the house of a hospitable friend ! How utterly undignified, impolite, vulgar, his course now looked ! What a useless exhibition of his feelings too ! It almost made him ill to think of it. And Lucie ? He tried to recall every word she had spoken to him, every look, every gesture, every posture. After all, had she given him any good reason for believing she did not care for him ? She had demanded the return of the sketch on Vance's account ; but — he had not thought of this before — it might have been to please her father, and to prevent open trouble, and not from any lover's reasons. Surely she had not repelled his tenderest

attentions with more than mere maidenly modesty, not in anger, not in the spirit of utter refusal. Why did he not stay, and, like a brave man determined to win a fair girl, put his whole strength into the effort to draw her to him? The more he abased himself, the brighter, sweeter, more beautiful, more desirable, she appeared. What a pure, healthy, charming girl, in what a little, old, perfumed, isolated world! Had she not been sheltered from the contaminations of society, and filled with all the charms of blooming girlhood, for him and no other? Ah! the fragrance of jasmine, the purity of the Cherokee rose, the modesty of the violet, all were hers, the gentle, dignified, beautiful Tallahassee girl! Had not some divine power drawn him away from the great groaning, crashing, rushing outside world, into her fairy circle of dusky oaks, fig-trees, flowers, perfumes, and mocking-birds, for some infinitely sweet, good purpose? Was it all over? Must he give it up thus? hear her voice no more? look into her eyes no more? leave her to her narrow world, and — Vance? He sat up in his bunk, and clinched his hands.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN WILLARD'S ABSENCE.

"I THINK, brother," said Miss Julie La Rue to the judge, "that, of all outrageously indecent things, this run-away of Willard's is the worst. It is absurdly inexcusable."

"Can't see what possessed him," replied the judge, "unless, unless — Julie," he stammered, changing his tone, "I half suspect he and Lucie quarrelled."

"How could they?"

"Oh, young folks have such inexplicable ways! Willard is, like his father used to be, full of crotchets; and Lucie is one of your self-willed little souls, you know."

"You've not caught the right view of the affair," said Miss La Rue, with all a woman's love for being indirect. "I think I know all about it."

"Well, what is it?"

"I have been having an interview with Mr. Cauthorne, from whom I have drawn some news."

"Well?"

"It was *not* a quarrel between *Lucie* and Willard."

"Oh! I only suspected that: it was barely possible, not probable! It was a quarrel, however, you seem to mean?"

"Not exactly. Willard feared there might be one."

"Well, why do you not tell me, and be done with it? The thing hangs on my mind. I want to get rid of it."

"Well, the upshot of it all is that Willard is a coward," she said very calmly, "and ran away for fear of having to meet Col. Vance."

"If Cauthorne said that, he is a"—

"Brother! I did not say Mr. Cauthorne told me *that*."

The old judge's face had grown florid. He was vastly irritated. His old friend's son should not be called a coward. He liked Willard for his own sake, too, as well as for his father's.

The facts in the case were, that Cauthorne had told Miss Julie La Rue just as little as he could, while meeting her persevering questions with perfect politeness. She had, nevertheless, obtained enough to satisfy her mind that Willard, with all a Northern man's dread of a personal encounter, had fled in order to escape the possibility of having to fight. And with what arguments could Lucie or Cauthorne dispute this theory?

Judge La Rue sought a conference with his daughter, who, in a few simple phrases, told him all she knew, withholding nothing. She even minutely stated the trivial circumstances touching the sketch and the fan.

"Now," said the judge, in a tone nearly severe, "I wish you would tell me, Lucie, what right Col. Vance had to get affronted because the boy" (he always said "the boy" in speaking to Lucie of Willard) "would not hand him over the picture. No young man of any spirit would be bullied in that way. The boy is a perfect gentleman, and had a right to be treated as such."

"Oh, papa, I'm so sorry if I did wrong!" Lucie began.

"No, daughter, no : you did no wrong. *You* had a right to demand the thing. The boy had no right to your picture without your consent ; but don't you see it was arrogance, it was high-handed presumption, in Col. Vance to meddle in the affair ? and I'll tell him so as soon as he returns. The boy was my guest, under my roof, a part of my household, one of my family almost. It was an insult to you and to me for Col. Vance to arrogate to himself the regulating of any of the affairs of my family or my guest." The old man had spoken slowly, and with great emphasis, like a judge giving an important ruling. Lucie remained silent, her eyes modestly downcast, and her hands toying restlessly with each other.

"What will my dear old friend think," he continued presently, "when the boy goes home, and reports that he was driven from under my roof, and that he had to leave the State of Florida for fear of death at the hands of a Southern" —

"O papa!" interrupted Lucie, looking up at him deprecatingly, "Mr. Willard would not say that."

"What else could he say?" demanded Judge La Rue.

Lucie was silent. She knew very well that nothing akin to cowardice had actuated Willard in going away; but her knowledge was of too subtle and elusive a sort to be explained by words. She had seen him standing in the rose-mist of his passion, so to speak, the beautiful love he bore her beaming from his saddened, manly young face. She was too natural and sweet a girl not to treasure with infinite tenderness those glimpses of a man's heart blown open like a flower for her sake. She had missed him greatly. She could not realize that he was gone from her forever. She hungered for more of those flashes of art-life, those carelessly graphic word-pictures of a world she had never seen, those fragmentary reminiscences of his London and Parisian experiences; his adventures as an art-student, his dallyings at the great watering-places. She stood by one of the windows of his room, and, looking away to the blue, undulating line of the horizon, wondered in what thronged city he was setting his feet. Had he already for-

gotten Tallahassee,—the little, dull, flower-scented, mocking-bird-haunted city,—and the poorly-cultured Tallahassee girl, who had so greedily caught every crumb of information he had flung to her?

Judge La Rue was a man of action. He immediately wrote the following letter, and sent it to Willard's home address:—

"MY DEAR BOY,—I have found out the secret of your flight from here. You are all wrong: there is no danger. I will not let Col. Vance hurt you. Everybody here thinks you went away because you were afraid of him. I hardly think this is just to you. If I were you I would come back at once. Vance is not especially dangerous. Hoping for your return at once,

"Very sincerely your friend,

"LA RUE."

When the judge had sent a colored boy to post this letter, he smiled grimly. He even chuckled all to himself. "If that missive doesn't fetch him back I'm mistaken," he thought, as he lighted his big brown meerschaum pipe, and leaned back in his easy-chair for a philosophical smoke.

Cauthorne came every day. He showed Lu-

cie the letters he received from Vance, whose stay was likely to be protracted, owing to the lingering, doubtful condition of his father. He knew full well that Willard's undue sensitiveness, and its consequences, had placed Lucie in a position which demanded the most delicate action on his part. He set himself to amuse her in every way which would not make his purpose obvious. He drew upon her sweet and lovable character for its best-guarded beauties, and with patient art set them in his book; but he was aware that the finest essence was escaping him. It was for him so hard a task to determine the boundary of hereditary, climatic, and sectional peculiarities, as contradistinguished from those arising out of the new order of social forces. He often asked himself the question, What manner of girl would Lucie La Rue have been had she been reared under the old Southern social *régime*? He as often could frame no satisfactory answer.

As the time for his departure drew near, he began to grow unwilling to leave Tallahassee. He had the excuse that his novel was far from finished; but the directors of the newspaper

would have a new field mapped out for him, and, without doubt, he would have to go.

The legislature adjourned, its members going away to their widely-scattered homes, leaving Tallahassee to its old dreamy quietude and languor. A warmer swell of weather came in from the Gulf. The sky grew bluer. The smoke of Wakulla became a more frequent spectre, wavering on the southern horizon. The weather-beaten and crumbling warehouses, once the receptacles of many thousand cotton-bales, took on a more ragged appearance, as the trees overshadowing them grew grayer and duskier in the heat. The grand old homes up in the higher parts of the city seemed to withdraw themselves deeper into their groves and embowering vines.

Cauthorne began to drive with Lucie every afternoon, when the sun was low and the breeze was fine. They went out along the western road to the old Murat homestead. It is a small frame-house, but a story and a half high, with heavy brick chimneys at the ends, and a low veranda across the front. It stands some distance back from the road, with two

stately oaks near its western end, and crowns a high hill overlooking the distant city and several small lakes, while to the north, west, and south, vast fertile plantations of red rolling land sweep away to the horizon.

There was no one living in the place. It was silent, dingy, out of repair. The fences were ragged, the ornamental shrubbery needed pruning. A rude trellis, overgrown with scuppernong vines, stood a little westward from the house.

Cauthorne and Lucie, leaving the driver to hold the horses by the roadside, got out of the carriage, and went up and sat on a bench under one of the oaks.

"If you will suffer it, I will smoke," said he, taking out a curious cigar-case of very fine workmanship.

"It does not even amount to a kindness if I consent," she replied; "for I enjoy the fragrant smell of a good cigar out of doors."

"Thank you. I never can fully appreciate an open-air chat without the company of this Indian luxury. But really, I'm no great smoker. Two or three a day are all I take."

"You must be an exception. Papa smokes twenty pipes a day; and—and most gentlemen who smoke are always indulging."

"Yes: they lose sight of the exquisite part of the thing, which is a subtle pleasure coming only to those who use tobacco of the finest quality, and sparingly. Sometimes I abstain for several days in order to get the full benefit of a slow-burning Havana."

He lighted a dark cigar, and began that leisurely puffing so in accord with a warm afternoon in the dreamy South.

"Don't you miss Willard?" he presently went on to say. "You and he used to ride and drive together so much."

"I do miss him," she said, elevating her face to gaze at the blue, cloudless arch of the sky. "He was so full of interesting things,—so different from"—

"From me or Vance, for instance," said Cauthorne, interrupting her.

She smiled, and nodded her head.

"You are kind to relieve me of a difficult task. I hated to say that," she said.

He looked quizzically at her, and exclaimed with a short laugh,—

"That is well-turned. You have been learning of him. Beware, or you will lose the fragrance your isolation has given you."

"If the crudeness and wildness could be lost with it, one could bear it. Besides, Mr. Willard's teachings are all safe, don't you think?"

"I am not sure; I don't know. At least he would not wilfully give you wrong views of life. I do not accept his art-notions. He is too much of an impressionist."

"An impressionist?" she very innocently inquired.

"Oh! that means one who cares nothing about elaborateness and precision in expressing an idea, so that the idea really be expressed. For instance, he would make a symphony out of"—

"That will do," exclaimed Lucie, laughing a little: "I know what his symphonies are."

"Yes, you know and you don't know," said Cauthorne. "His combinations are many and difficult, and they are all fascinating. You found him getting a great hold on you, did you not?"

"I liked him," she curtly and naively replied.

"Of course. They all do. He gains smiles and favors from them wherever he goes. He makes no effort to win: they smile to know they lose."

"He is a lost subject," said Lucie: "suppose we turn away from him. He always told about what he had seen and done. Why don't you talk about your past? it is interesting, from what Mr. Willard hinted."

"When I was a boy I ploughed on a stony hillside in Vermont," he said. "I remember the horse was blind of an eye, and the plough had one handle bound on with a leather strap. Sometimes when the point hit a stone, that handle would punch me in the side, and make my ribs ache for the rest of the day."

"But when you were a man?" suggested Lucie.

"I came to fight the South, and got into Andersonville prison-pen. I died there every hour for months and months."

"Well, and after that?"

"Oh, after that I went to Iceland, and wrote letters for 'The Herald.' I froze my skin all over me, and it has never been quite the same since."

"And then?"

"Then I went to France, to report the dying struggle of Napoleon with Prussia. I got a three-cornered piece of shell through my thigh at Sedan. I saw the Red Republican doings in Paris. A woman shot me in the shoulder, thinking I was a Prussian."

"Well, go on, please: what next?"

"I have just fairly come out of service in the Russo-Turkish struggle. That was the roughest of all my experiences, excepting Andersonville."

"Was Andersonville really so horrible? I have heard our soldiers say the Northern prisons were unbearable."

"I guess that is dangerous ground," said Cauthorne, with a doleful smile. "Let's get off the subject right at once. Whenever I think of the hideous old doctor who pretended to wait on me there, I feel like"—

"There, I accept your proposition to change the subject," she exclaimed. "See how beautiful our little city looks from here."

"It is a happy, dreamy-looking place," he responded; "it reminds one of an old-fash-

ioned bee-hive, under an apple-tree, when the bees are lying around resting. The bees always are resting in Tallahassee, aren't they?"

She looked at him as if slowly turning over and examining his phrases, then,—

"You mean that we are lazy?" she said.

"Not in the ordinary sense. I think it is the climate. People bask here. They have no time to bask in the North."

"We are dull and uninteresting to you, because we are—are ruined by the war?" she rejoined, with just the most distant hint of bitterness in her tone.

"No," he said, looking down at her with a sudden tenderness in his eyes. "You are very interesting, and you are not ruined by the war. You do not even resemble a ruin."

She laughed.

"That sounds like Mr. Willard," she said. "You must have a care, or you will be losing your—your soldierly brusqueness."

"I am losing it. I am losing a great deal else that I can spare. But I am beginning to find something to take the space, something so

new and sweet and strange. It has stolen into me and filled me, like a perfume."

Lucie rose, and went to a little unkempt shrub, whose scattering flowers gave out uncertain color. She stood there in silence, with her back to Cauthorne. He elevated his voice, and continued, "You needn't run from me: I can talk enormously loud. I have a voice which can startle Tallahassee out of its summer sleep."

She did not look around. She put her hands up, and covered her ears, prettily shrugging her shoulders.

Cauthorne got up, and went to her side. He had intended to say something suiting his mood; but she turned to him, and pointing toward the city with her hand,—

"Now, from here, isn't it a lovely sight?" she cried, her voice trembling as if with the emotion aroused by the beautiful prospect.

And it was a charming view. A deep valley lay below them, beyond which rose a vast mound, whereon the houses of Tallahassee were sown, gleaming white and gray and brown among the waving groves, from top to base.

The old-fashioned Capitol building stood on nearly the highest swell. Just below it, on the hither side, the old inn, the City Hotel, with all its little gabled roof-windows and dilapidated verandas, slept among its trees. Farther northward the low lines of business houses, the forsaken cotton yards and warehouses, and then the little market-house and sunny square; still beyond, and a little higher, the broad-winged, roomy, old residences looking out from among the grandest and beautifulest trees in the world. They could see the color of the foliage change with many a scintillation, as the waves of the breeze swept over those undulated groves.

"And see! Look!" she continued. "Wakulla is at full blast!"

He followed her hand with his eyes, and saw, far in the south-east, a slim, mysterious, dark column of smoke spouting straight up to the sky. It seemed actually to strike the empyrean, and rebound from its surface in dense fleeces and flakes.

"It is a great mystery,—that lonely smoke-jet in the vast Wakulla swamp," said Cauthorne musingly: "why doesn't some one undertake to reach it?"

"I don't know," she replied. Then she added quickly, "Oh, Judge White did try it, but he failed!"

"I was talking with Col. Brevard and Mayor Lewis about it yesterday," said Cauthorne; "and I have written to the proprietors of our paper suggesting that they send me to look after this inveterate smoker."

"You will find nothing," she said, with a little contempt of the scheme in her voice: "there is nothing to find. Judge White says the swamp is absolutely impenetrable. And see, while we've been talking the smoke has vanished!"

Sure enough, it had. Cauthorne turned to Lucie with a sort of incredulous cloud on his face, and said,—

"You will be fading from my sight next, and a ghost will come out of the Murat palace yonder. By the way, tell me something of Murat and his wife, will you?"

"Oh! I know absolutely nothing about them. They have fallen out of the memory of most people here. The war was such a sponge. It obliterated every thing."

"Is there nothing of them left over? Were their lives a blank here?"

"There is a curious old chair in the Supreme Court room at the Capitol," she said. "I have wanted it ever since I first saw it. It was the Prince Achille Murat's favorite chair, brought by him from France out of a palace of Louis XVI. The *fleur-de-lis* is carved upon its gilded wood-work. It is curiously upholstered in green velvet and satin."

They drove homeward along the red road, down the bold hill, to the flats where the car and repair shops of the railway gave forth their black coal-smoke and clang of machinery; across an attenuated streamlet, and then up the slopes of the city to the level, sandy, shady streets.

They passed by a grand mansion of former times,—a great square building, with broad verandas and stately chimneys, which seemed unoccupied, so bare and staring its windows, so unused its doors.

"I should like to buy this place," said Cauthorne, "and come here to live. Who is the owner?"

"It belongs to an order of Catholic sisters," replied Lucie: "two ladies of the city, charitably inclined, bought it, and gave it for a religious school."

"How silly!" he said. "Such a mansion for a schoolhouse!"

"We are too poor," she replied ruefully: "we cannot keep up such places any more. It would cost so much to furnish, so much for servants, and I don't know what all. We are too poor."

This made him thoughtful for a time; and when he looked up they were at the gate of the La Rue premises, and every mocking-bird in all that tangled wilderness was an active fountain of song.

By the side of the carriage-way, between the house and the gate, a negro girl, about fourteen years of age, lay asleep, her face in a hot space of sunshine, her body and feet in the shade. She was as happy as a princess in a palace on a bed of down, fanned by perfumed attendants. She grinned lazily, half waking, as they passed.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A PICNIC ON LAKE BRADFORD.

CAUTHORNE found Miss Lucie La Rue too difficult a subject for his understanding, trained though it was, to compass. Day by day he studied her, with but one thing to encourage him,—his own growing interest. Her confidence in him could not be mistaken. She felt as safe with him as with a brother, and would go with him upon any kind of riding, driving, or walking excursion he cared to propose. She did not seem to have any conception whatever of his danger or of her power; but she well understood her own safety, and, wrapped in such knowledge as in a perfect mail, she nervously and modestly gave herself over to pleasing him, and being pleased by him. This, indeed, was what he found to be the peculiar charm of the Southern girls: so long

as you are not inside the golden circle of their friendship, with the password, given you by a father or a brother, or other guardian, ready upon your lips, you are a million miles away, although near enough to hear their ribbons flutter in the breeze; but, when once you are taken into the family enclosure, you become the trusted friend of every member, and are honored with a confidence so pure and dignified, and yet so simple and sweet, that you wonder how quickly and easily you become a Southern aristocrat. And it would be better for you, that, with a millstone about your neck, you were let fall into the Gulf Stream, than that you should, in the slightest degree, prove false to your obligations. The stately father or quiet, polite brother would, upon occasion, slash you with a bowie-knife, or shoot you with a derringer; and the dark-eyed, delicate, graceful damsel would not blame him at all, if she did not applaud.

One day a little party, among them Cau-thorne and Lucie, went to picnic on the shore of Lake Bradford,—a pretty little basin-full of water, lying some three or four miles south-

west from Tallahassee. The journey was performed on horseback, and it gave Cauthorne an excellent opportunity to study the exquisite equestrianism displayed by the ladies. One girl, a sparkling miss of fifteen, rode with all the grace and ease of one trained in the best school. In fact, hers had been the best school,—that of perfect freedom to ride when she pleased, from childhood up.

The way lay along the road past the Murat place; thence diagonally across the beautiful Bloxham plantation, and on through a flat pine-woods into a wild swamp; through a sluggish stream, which made the gentlemen draw up their feet, and the ladies handle the skirts of their flowing habits; then past a queer log cabin, in the door of which an old negress sat smoking a pipe; and through a scrubby oak-wood, into full view of the little lake shining like liquid glass in its green-bordered basin. It was a free-and-easy ride, now at a gallop, now in a walk, with much talking and some laughter; but it had none of that echoing gayety so often an accompaniment to such a lark in the North. There was more bowing

Vance did not speak.
He wished to wound Cauthorne
very much desired to do so.
It was not ugly selfishness,
feeling: it was a genuine
sudden developed, due to
doubt, to Cauthorne's share
half of his political measures.
owing to Cauthorne's genial
acter and ready comrade-
edge of men and things,
honesty in expressing his

"We need not go and have
other," Vance said at last:
have shown yourself a good
true friend. It was to av-
you that I sought this inter-
lard was your friend"—

"Then you should have
in your language to me in
said Cauthorne bluntly.

Vance bit his lip, and said
between his thumb and finger:

"It is an awkward thing
presently said. "I wanted
Willard and I cannot get on

which would say, "I am of this or **that old family**;" he did not suggest a line of **ancestors** by the way he waved his hand or arched **his brows**. But he was friendly and kindly-voiced, and full of **expedients** for making **amusement**, and quick to see what every trivial **exigency** demanded. None of the other gentlemen **of** the party were near so big-limbed and **broad-shouldered** and tall and large-headed and **liberal-visaged**. They were straighter, lither, **more** graceful, quicker-motioned, more like **military officers** or cadets at dress parade. They **were** more inclined to erect attitudes and to **standing** squarely upon both feet at the same time.

It chanced—and, after all, chance had nothing to do with it—that late in the afternoon Cauthorne took Lucie far out on the lake, and then, throwing down his oars, crossed his hands in front of him, and began to talk with her. He was not quite satisfied, lately, when not talking with her.

"I have half determined," he said, smiling in what to her seemed his boyish way, "to stay right here with you forever, drifting as the swell lists, going as the breeze may draw."

and hand-waving and other easeful gestures of formality all the time visible, and more marks of deference to the ladies, more of quiet respect shown to the men.

Miss Julie La Rue, stout and rather aged as she was, made herself the leader of this cavalcade and picnic, and to her they all were indebted for the more substantial part of the day's enjoyments. She had an eye to the proprieties, and watched her flock with delicate care.

There were some skiffs at their service, but none of them had sails. Cauthorne took occasion to display his great power at the oars. He was a man of mighty and trained muscles, and his many wounds seemed not to have weakened them in the least. He was so willing and so frank and so strong, that he easily became a great favorite with all, and especially with the girls. To these, who had all their lives been used to men who would never unbend from a certain formal stiffness, he seemed a great, big, honest boy, glad to be alive and useful, ready to enjoy whatever might turn round to him. He had nothing of the air

which would say, "I am of this or that old family;" he did not suggest a line of ancestors by the way he waved his hand or arched his brows. But he was friendly and kindly-voiced, and full of expedients for making amusement, and quick to see what every trivial exigency demanded. None of the other gentlemen of the party were near so big-limbed and broad-shouldered and tall and large-headed and liberal-visaged. They were straighter, lither, more graceful, quicker-motioned, more like military officers or cadets at dress parade. They were more inclined to erect attitudes and to standing squarely upon both feet at the same time.

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"Are all you Northern men full of that sort of—of sentiment?" she asked, bending over the little gunwale, and idly tipping the water with her fan.

"It is not sentiment," he replied in a tone of gentle resentfulness: "it is sincere responsiveness to a most charming influence,—this climate, the local spirit of things, and all that. Why, one dips into an atmosphere of romance as soon as he enters the Tallahassee hills. You wouldn't wish one to be unnatural, would you?"

"Oh, certainly!" she cried almost gleefully: "unnatural people are the most charming in the world. They make you forget the immense monotony of real life."

He was thoughtful for a minute or more, and then he suddenly said,—

"Miss La Rue, I do not wonder you think real life monotonous. You are living in a little city which is the type of perfect monotony and dulness. You ought to see our Northern life. We buzz, whirl, leap joyfully on. Every day we are farther along, with limbs trained for the race, and eyes alert for every possible

demand of progress. Your people feed upon the past : they will not admit that there is any future."

She looked up at him with the first flash of anger he had ever seen on her finely-chiselled face.

"Who robbed us of hope, ambition, our property, our prosperity, our renown, our bravest and strongest young lives?" she exclaimed, in that calm way of hers, with her hands clinched on the gunwale. "How can one help feeding on the past with four brothers in soldiers' graves, and another worse than dead — all one's property gone, and a black cloud of ignorant freedmen camping upon one's ruined estates?"

"Forgive me," he cried : "forgive me : I did not mean to be understood as you have understood me. I spoke of your surroundings as monotonous and perhaps unwholesome. I did not mean to reproach your people for what they cannot help. I beg you not to be offended at an idle comparison!"

She smiled, a wan, far-away smile, as she came slowly back to herself after her burst of energetic displeasure. Never before, in all

her life, had she exhibited such passionate resentment. She was still trembling from the effect of it. She was aware, in a sort of indefinite way, that it was because *he* had said what he did, and not because it had been said, that she had felt hurt. Somehow she expected *him* to always be soothing in his talk, never irritating. Now she had a hard struggle to repress her tears. She saw very clearly that she had misconstrued him. However, her smile re-assured him, and he quickly and lightly changed the subject of talk.

"What is that?" he asked, touching with his boot a curious wooden bucket, which lay in the bottom of the boat.

"It is a water-telescope, — a sponger's bucket," she replied.

"And what is it for?"

"You don't know? You see it has a glass bottom. Put it on the water, and look down through it, and you can see to the bottom of the lake. The sponge-gatherers on the gulf-coast use them. They float on the water all day long, gazing through their sponge-buckets, with their long-handled sponge-tongs lying in their boats beside them."

He adjusted the rude instrument as she directed, and, leaning low over the gunwale of the skiff, looked down into the water. The effect was so wonderful that he started back. It made the water so perfectly transparent that he seemed suspended in mid-air. Far down he saw the sand-grains and pebbles at the bottom, seemingly undiminished in apparent size by the distance. The sensation of flying, as he had experienced it in his dreams, came upon him with all its strange witchery. For many minutes he did not move except with the slight rising and dipping of the skiff. Lucie brushed a tear from her cheek, and, in her struggle to regain her composure, sang a little song in a low, bewilderingly sweet voice.

Why was it that there and then, as he seemed to hang like a bird in the air, and with her gentle music filling his ears, his mind went back almost a score of years to revel in the smoke and blood of battle where the musketry was like the roar of a tempest, and the thunder of the cannons shook the hills? Was it the voice of his consciousness telling him that never in this life could he and Lucie La Rue

interpret alike the meaning of that tempest and that thunder? Why should he suddenly recollect every little detail of his ride across the battle front of Chickamauga, as a courier from below Gordon's Mills to the cross-roads at the mountain gap? He could hear the hoof-beats of his horse, he could see the spouting smoke of the field-guns, and the keen lightning of the rifles. He is there,—he is madly tearing on,—he rushes into a little thicket,—a rebel soldier rises before him with levelled gun,—he jerks his horse aside just as the rebel fires,—quick as lightning he levels his pistol, and sends a ball crashing through the fellow's hand, and another through his leg, and sees him sink down. Every line of that young rebel's handsome face comes out on the field of his memory. Why does he start, and sit up in the boat, and gaze so hopelessly at Lucie? The face of the mangled rebel boy was the very face of Victor La Rue. Why does Cauthorne glance over his own stalwart form in thinking of poor wrecked Victor? Does he think he represents the strong, symmetrical, prosperous North — Victor the shattered, scarred, dispirited, moody South?

"What was that little thing you sang just now? Go over the first stanza again, please," he said, as Lucie looked up at him.

"Take me home to the place where I first saw the light,
To the sweet, sunny South take me home,
Where the mocking-bird sang me to rest every night:
Oh! why was I tempted to roam?"

sang Lucie, giving the whole wonderful power of her voice to the effort; and she did not stop with the stanza, but went on to the end of the song. Her friends far away on the lake-shore heard every word with perfect distinctness.

As she ceased, she lifted her hand, and cried out, "Oh, look, look!"

Cauthorne raised his eyes, and saw a broad Japanese sketch against the sky,—a flight of herons above the lake from horizon to zenith; long folded necks, slender bills pointing upward; shadowy legs stretched far behind; broad, laboring wings. Slowly they passed on to the northward, thinking, no doubt, of the brooks of Indiana, and the broad marshes of the Illinois and the Kankakee.

"I must soon be following them," he said, "unless our paper concludes to send me to reconnoitre the smoke of Wakulla."

"You might better go home than to undertake that," she replied; "but you must not take it that I want you to go."

He looked eagerly to read her eyes.

"Do you really wish me to stay?" he asked, knowing that he was treating her unfairly.

"Not right here any longer," she quickly and lightly replied. "I am ever so ready to return to our friends yonder. See, they are making signals."

Cauthorne had noticed a whirl of clouds rising in the south-west, and rightly suspected there would soon be a little blow without any rain. He took up the oars none too quickly, for little cat's-paws and counter-flaws began to scamper over the water. Lucie looked alarmed.

"I can outgo a cyclone," he said gayly; and, leaning to, he drove the little skiff along, skimming the surface like a swallow.

And Lucie's face grew sweetly calm. She knew she was perfectly safe.

Cauthorne rode home with Lucie's aunt, and

found her remarkably well informed touching some things of great interest to him, especially the past social, commercial, and political history of the Tallahassee region. She described the town of Newport and the celebrated sulphur-springs near there, as they existed before the war. The town once had two thousand inhabitants, large hotels, and warehouses. It was one of the ports of Tallahassee, being situated on the St. Mark's River, and shipped its fifty thousand bales of cotton and its vast cargoes of sugar every year.

"It is gone now," she said : "nothing is left to tell where it was, save one large, deserted hotel, and a few dilapidated houses mostly occupied by negroes. And there was Belair, only a few miles southward from Tallahassee,—a beautiful little town, composed of the summer residences of rich planters. It was a centre of wit, refinement, wealth, and great luxury. Ah, what social gatherings I have attended there! But those stately homes are actually rotting down. Only two white families and some listless negroes live there now. Down near the Gulf was St. Mark's, on the river

below Newport. It was another Tallahassee port, and the southern terminus of the St. Mark's and Tallahassee Railroad. It is gone too, only a house or two left."

She talked freely of the distinguished people she had met,—statesmen, poets, artists, foreign noblemen, famous women, the stars of the stage, and the brilliant lights of Washington, Baltimore, and Charleston society.

"They used to come every winter," she said,— "gay, brilliant troops of them; and our grand houses were flung open to receive them, and we made their stay a continued source of delight to themselves and to us."

She spoke of remembering, when she was a mere child, meeting Harriet Martineau at a friend's plantation house near Montgomery, Ala. She said,—

"I was there, on a visit with my mother, when Miss Martineau came. I recollect her as a queer, deaf person, much more interested in peering into negro cabins, and talking politics with the gentlemen, than in seeking the society of ladies."

She remarked upon the degradation of the

fine old plantations by the system of tillage adopted by the freedmen. She called Cau-thorne's attention to the shallow ploughing consequent on the use of little primitive ploughs drawn by an ox or a diminutive mule.

"Year by year," she said, "this manner of working is exhausting these once apparently inexhaustible fields, and soon they must become worthless."

"And what is to be the end of it all?" Cau-thorne asked, desiring to hear the final result as she would draw it.

"Abandonment to the negroes and a set of whites who are still more abject," she replied.

He remembered too well the effect of his own sort of argument on Lucie to care to try it with Miss Julie La Rue, so he made no direct response.

When he had parted with the ladies at the gate of their homestead, and had returned to his room at the hotel, he found a letter awaiting him from his employers.

Its purport may be gathered from the following extract:—

"If the Wakulla smoke seems to be any thing more than mere smoke, take two or three weeks, and look into it. You are on the ground, and ought to be able to judge fairly of the probabilities of its importance. As for us, we do not believe it is worth any trouble or expense. But you are to be guided by the facts as they exist."

Cauthorne at once determined to make further examination of the probabilities before entering upon any actual exploration. For the three or four days next following he was busily engaged in consultations and interviews with such persons as had, or pretended to have, knowledge of the location and nature of the great swamp out of which the smoke had, for fifty years, been seen rising.

The end of the matter was, he arranged for a reconnoissance.

CHAPTER XIX.

A RAID OF BLONDES.

TO most Northern persons Jacksonville is Florida. All the railroads built into Florida go straight to Jacksonville. Even the great St. John's River runs to that happy, fortunate city. All the Florida guide-books have large cuts of Jacksonville hotels. All the great land speculators and immigration schemers dwell in Jacksonville cottages, very new, perky, and obviously un-Southern. If you go to Jacksonville, you can with difficulty hear of any other place to go to. Jacksonville takes you into its inner bosom, and there holds you so long as your leisure or your money lasts. You may hear vague rumors of an old city named St. Augustine, and of a little stream called the Ocklawaha, of certain desirable orange-hummocks away off somewhere, of the Fountain

of Youth, and of Okechobee Lake; but you will never even hear of Tallahassee. To the citizens of Jacksonville, Tallahassee is an ineffable name. They will not allow it to pass their lips. The Jacksonville papers say, "the State capital," or "the seat of government:" they never print the word "Tallahassee." That extremely popular song, "The Tallahassee Girl," was tabooed and silenced forever in Jacksonville the first time a young lady from Monticello attempted to sing it in one of the hotels. "My dear young lady," said the hotel proprietor, "we beg your pardon; but we are advertising in the other direction. We cannot break faith with our friends. The song has an unfortunate name. We think the State capital will be moved when the next legislature meets. Dreadful dull old seedy town up there: no hotel,—nothing there." The young lady saw at once that the song was not fashionable. She let it go.

Occasionally the winter boarders at some Jacksonville hotel suddenly catch the excursion-fever,—a disease little known among native Southerners. They wish to go some-

where. Usually this ends in a steamboat-ride up the St. John's to Palatka, or down the St. John's to Fernandina Beach. Such a thing as an excursion to Tallahassee had not been mentioned at the most fashionable Jacksonville hotel for years, when one day in March, during the progress of the events of our story, Mr. Lucius Hatch boldly sprung the question. Before the hotel proprietor was aware of its existence, a conspiracy had been completed, and about thirty of his liveliest boarders were off for a week at the capital. Alarmed and chagrined he followed them to the railway-station, eloquently expostulating with Hatch upon his foolhardy undertaking.

"Why, sir, there's no hotel; the people are all poor and seedy; there's nothing to eat, there's nothing to see, there's nothing to do; no water, no boats, no any thing," he insisted; but Hatch and his followers were enthusiastic.

"The green hills of Piedmont-Florida," they cried: "we are dying to see a hill, if it's only an ant-hill or a mole-hill. We are tired of the dull flats about Jacksonville."

Their host groaned, and reiterated his ex-

postulations. It availed him nothing. The gentlemen said,—

“Oh, it’s Hatch’s notion!” and the ladies cried, “It’s so romantic! We can camp on a sheep-farm, or take possession of a deserted village.”

“The fleas, the fleas!” muttered the host.

“We’ll chance ‘em,” said Hatch: “he can well afford to brave all the insects of the tropics, who has stemmed the tide of Jacksonville mosquitoes and sand-flies.”

This was an unkind cut. It weakened the adversary’s nerve. The hotel man turned sadly away. If you wish to exasperate a Jacksonville person beyond all endurance, suggest to him that, of all places in the land of flowers, Jacksonville probably has fewest attractions and most mosquitoes. If you would like to see a poor urchin mobbed, bribe a boot-black to go down a Jacksonville street whistling the air of “The Tallahassee Girl.”

Hatch had chanced to read a communication of Cauthorne’s to his paper, relative to the physical beauties of the Tallahassee region; and this it was which had caused him to organ-

ize the excursion thither. He knew Cauthorne, had met him often at the Union Club, and was inclined to believe that whatever he would print over his own name would be rather under-drawn than overdrawn.

Hatch was a railroad man of considerable note, and could control every facility for moving his party. Parlor cars were provided, loaded with ample luncheon-baskets, champagne, ice, tea, coffee, colored waiting boys, and every thing else, even to cigars, seltzer, and brandy, which could conduce to the comfort or convenience of gentlemen and ladies, or either.

And so, after a merry ride, they came into Tallahassee late in the afternoon. Telegraphic despatches had preceded them, asking for means of conveyance to the hotel; and consequently a cloud of negroes, with all manner of carriages, stood ready to assault them when they arrived. Carriages were there drawn by one horse, two horses, and four horses. Negroes were there in tatters, and negroes were there in natty suits of black cloth. All sorts of gesticulation met the eye, all kinds of impudent vocalization struck the ear.

No. 1.—“Right dis way, boss, wid de ladies. My carridge is de fines’. Take you to de hotel in style, boss.”

No. 2.—“Git outen de way, niggah, let de gentlem come; doan you see he know where he gwine to? Bring on de ladies, boss.”

No. 3.—“Bet if I h’ist ye one in de year, Dave, you’ll not be gittin’ in de way of my passengers ag’in. Right straight along to de carridge, boss.”

No. 4.—“How many ladies, boss? Take ye up in de four-hoss carryall, fines’ carridge in de city. Right yar, boss.”

No. 5.—“Hayr’s de omnybus fur de City Hotel! Bes’ ‘commodations in de city. Here you are, boss, git right in; any baggage?”

No. 6.—“Git ‘long wid yer one-hoss b’rouche! Hayr’s de quality carridge; it’s got de lates’ style. Doan listen to dem niggahs, boss, dey’s got nuffin but a *borrerd* wagon: dey doan *own* no carridge.”

No. 7.—“Dey’s jis’ room fo’ foa’ moa’ in de golden rockaway boun’ fo’ any part ob de city. Step in wid de ladies, boss.”

No. 8.—“Shet up yo’ trap, Sam, you an’

John's done 'bout 'nuff hollerin' fo' one day.
Dese gentlem know whar' to fine de bes' 'com-
modations. Come 'long, boss, I take ye whar'
ye wanter go."

No. 9.—"Hayer's de Tallahassee palace
coach wid kwishened seats an' glass winders.
Carry ye up for a quawtah, boss, come right
'long."

The excursionists, perfectly able to take
excellent care of themselves, hurried into the
proffered vehicles, and were drawn up the steep
red hill to the old hotel.

Cauthorne, who had not seen any Northern-
ers for so long a time, felt that these rustling,
bustling, chattering folk were all in some
degree his guests. He was immediately intro-
duced by Hatch to the gentlemen of the party,
and, later in the evening, to the ladies.

The moon was near the full; and it was ar-
ranged that carriages should be procured, and
that the city should be done by moonlight.

A very noticeable thing was the fact that,
of the eighteen ladies in the party, fifteen
were decided blondes, the remaining three
scarcely brunettes; of the fourteen gentlemen

only four were dark-haired. It was Col. Brevard who gave them the name of the Blonde Raiders.

To the more staid citizens of quiet, drowsy old Tallahassee, the manners of the excursionists appeared of doubtful propriety. Their loud, though well-modulated, voices rang along the streets in talk and laughter as they called to each other, flinging gay remarks and sparkling replies back and forth from carriage to carriage.

Cauthorne and Hatch, with three ladies,—Hatch's aunt, and two young women by the name of Barnes,—occupied an open landau, which was driven slowly along all the streets of the city, Cauthorne pointing out every thing of interest as they passed it.

Whoever has been in the South has noticed with what splendor the full moon shines there; but in the high region of Tallahassee, where the night air is free from impurities and mists, the effect of its light is glorious beyond description. Every object is so clearly visible in it that one fancies that outlines are, in a way, accentuated by it.

In this strong, mellow light the excursionists saw Tallahassee, and were seen by the Tallahasseeans. The effect was unique in both directions. To the Southerners this rippling and humming stream of fair faces, plump forms, and blue travelling-dresses; these shining heads of yellow hair, braided and frizzed and banged; these clear blue, alert eyes; these loud, merry voices; this chattering and laughter; this appearance of careless ease and luxury,—suggested the old golden days when splendor and wealth and prodigal hospitality brought all these into their homes, and made them ring with gayety. To the excursionists Tallahassee was, what it is to every one who sees it, the very loveliest, drowsiest, dreamiest old town they had ever seen. To the most careless observer among them, the place showed, in ways very difficult to make plain with words, its oasis-like isolation, and its tangled luxuriance of semi-tropical vegetation. Along with this it also suggested a social isolation of long standing, and a slowly advancing dissolution of that common bond which holds a community together.

"Here is the only place that I know of where the old South is still dominant," said Cauthorne, addressing his companions collectively. "I find the Tallahassee people a delightful study."

"The place is a great and very agreeable surprise to me," said Hatch's aunt. "I had made up my mind, from what I was told in Jacksonville, to see a wretched old village with scarcely a pretence of decency in its appearance."

Hatch was delighted, and the young ladies declared that Tallahassee was perfectly charming.

"I have been here several months," said Cauthorne, "and I grow more attached to my surroundings every day. There is a last-century stateliness and uprightness; a conservatism, a scrupulousness, a seclusion, about the people, which makes me feel that they are a genuine, unadulterated remnant of the antebellum South."

"How interesting!" cried one of the young ladies. "Do the ladies dip snuff, as they do in North Carolina?"

"That accomplishment never reached this far South," replied Cauthorne. "In all seriousness, there is refinement of a unique and most superior order here, and especially among the ladies."

"Oh, I dare say there is!" said the other Miss Barnes; "but what do they manage to do with themselves? No amusements ever reach here, I suppose,—no opera, no play, no art-exhibition, or any thing."

"Only yesterday," said Cauthorne, "I was at a picnic, a most enjoyable and original affair, on the beach of Lake Bradford near here. We rode to the spot on horseback, had boats on the lake, and a superb luncheon. Then a few weeks ago I attended a splendid party at the mansion we are now about to pass: it is Judge La Rue's place. These large grounds were beautifully lighted up, and turned into a magnificent summer garden, and the old house was lined with flowers. There were two hundred guests."

As they slowly passed the gate, Cauthorne looked up the walk, and saw sitting on a favorite rustic seat Lucie and Willard. He could not be mistaken. The truant had returned.

Judge La Rue, pipe in mouth, sat near them. It was, to Cauthorne at least, a very striking group.

Just at this point the whole party of excursionists, coming on behind Cauthorne's and Hatch's carriage, became suddenly quite noisy, a contagious mirth breaking out among them, and they made the welkin ring with their voices. And yet these were really refined persons making all this racket. It was the license of American tourists they were indulging in. An "excursion" without rudeness of some harmless sort would be a very novel and insipid affair; but the echoes of their mirthfulness did bound and clatter around in that quiet place in a way which Cauthorne tried not to realize. He felt guilty of being accessory to a great infringement of local custom, and that justice required a vicarious suffering on his part for the sins of the whole party. It was a long, solemn sabbath they were breaking, a sabbath which dawned with the Emancipation Proclamation, and which would end—when?

The excursionists interested Cauthorne no

longer. His mind caught upon Willard and Lucie, and there hung. A strange sound was in his ears. A sense as of a heavy weight upon his bosom oppressed him. He tried to shake it off. It would not be moved. The lines of the moonlit landscape became hard and ugly. The old gray houses, set among the orange and fig trees, looked like stiff boxes in the midst of ragged thickets. The mocking-birds, sleepily singing their night songs in the heavy-limbed trees, made no impression upon his fancy. He looked at the strong, willowy blonde beside him, but he did not see her. In her place he contemplated a quiet, dark-faced girl, whose wealth of blue-black hair and whose soft gray eyes had power to control the very pulses of his heart. He was troubled on account of Willard's return. He was aware of what it meant, but he could not see how it was to end,—Vance, Willard, and himself all drawn toward Lucie La Rue, each dreading the others' influence, each feeling that more than life depended from the issue.

The carriages rolled on in the shadow-flecked streets, and came back at last to the starting-

place. The gay party, like a swarm of bright-winged bees, poured into the old hotel, and were conducted to their rooms.

In the apartments of the ladies there was much chattering and laughter; in those of the gentlemen, much clinking of glasses, and puffing of fragrant smoke.

Cauthorne sat by his window, and allowed the cool night-wind to ripple across his troubled face. These beautiful, careless, unrestrained, blonde raiders had served as a contrast to heighten the charms of Lucie La Rue, just at a time when she seemed about to slip away from him.

He was no visionary. He very sensibly tried to reason with himself; but it was not a case for reason. What part of being in love is a subject of logical treatment? He chafed in spite of himself. Why did not Willard stay away when once he had gone? What right had he to come back, and insist upon having his chances over again? It looked so boyish and silly to see a fellow so crazy about a girl! He never would have come back under such circumstances,—never in the world! Such

petulance looks light on paper; but what man is so strong and so evenly balanced that he never has given room for it in his own breast?

The excursionists remained in Tallahassee some days, doing all the places of interest in the neighborhood. A young artist among them sketched every thing he saw which would admit of picturesque treatment, sending great express bundles of his work away to "Harper's Weekly" and other illustrated journals. A tall blonde lady who wore glasses, and who seemed rather independent of the rest of the party, called at the office of "The Floridian," and procured the insertion of the following personal:—

"Miss Emma L. Dozenbloomer, the charming correspondent of 'The Albany Letterpress,' and authoress of 'Amanda's Secret,' is in the city. She is collecting material for another book."

While she was in the office Capt. Dyke, the reserved and polite editor, showed her two enormous alligator-teeth brought from Big Cypress Swamp. He also gave her the pamphlet of "The Immigration Bureau," and a

delightfully breezy "Report of the Agricultural Resources of Leon County."

The same issue of "The Floridian" contained the announcement of the death of ex-Gov. Vance at Hot Springs, Ark.

CHAPTER XX.

THOU ART THE MAN.

A DAY or two after the coming of the excursionists, and before their departure, Cauthorne went up to La Rue place. Just as he passed through the gate he saw Victor La Rue sitting on the buttress of roots at the foot of an oak. He had his crutch across his lap, and was smoking his pipe.

Cauthorne bowed, and would have passed on to the house, but La Rue called to him.

"Come and sit with me here," he said: "I wish to have a little talk with you."

A chill crept through Cauthorne's big frame. Lately he had been dreading to meet Victor La Rue. The thought had been growing in his mind, that here was all that was left of the soldier he had shot on the field of Chickamauga. Deeds of courage, boldness, valor,

done in the midst of a battle-cyclone, are well enough to remember, and to mention upon occasion, so long as there remains a proper impersonality about the matter; but it requires a hardened heart to meet without qualms what was now cast across Cauthorne's path. He looked into La Rue's face, and his fear was confirmed. He was the very man. There were the stubs of the fingers he had shot away, and there was the remnant of the leg his ball had caused to be amputated. It was with illy concealed trepidation that Cauthorne turned aside and approached La Rue. The crutch had an accusing look.

"It is cool here," said the maimed man, making room on the gnarled roots beside him: "the wind comes under the trees, and makes the shade delightful."

Cauthorne sat down, and relighted his partially burned cigar.

"I have been thinking and thinking, since you came to Tallahassee, where I ever saw you before," continued La Rue; "and I believe I have recognized you at last, though I may be mistaken, sir."

Cauthorne rolled his cigar in his mouth, and gazed up into the tree-top, trying to formulate a way to avoid details.

"Had you ever seen me before I came here?" he simply asked.

"I am not sure, sir; but I believe I had. Were you in the battle of Chickamauga?"

"Yes."

"On the Yankee side?"

"On the Union side, yes."

"Beg pardon, sir: I meant no offence by the word 'Yankee.'"

"No offence, I assure you," said Cauthorne quickly.

"You were riding a large black horse," La Rue added.

"Yes."

"You galloped through a line of Confederate skirmishers in a brushy place not far from Lee and Gordon's Mills?"

"Yes."

"I thought I had found you out. Don't you recollect *me*, sir?"

"Yes," said Cauthorne, rising and standing before La Rue, his face growing white.

The lame soldier grasped his crutch, and scrambled to his feet.

Cauthorne would have given every thing but his honor and his life to have been able to avoid any further interview. He glanced about him as if looking for some way of escape. Would this maimed and mangled man force a fight upon him? The thought was horrible.

"Do you recollect of my jumping out from behind a tree, and shooting at you?" pursued La Rue.

"Yes."

"And I missed you?"

"Yes."

"And — and — you — you shot me!"

"Yes."

Cauthorne fixed his eyes steadily on the face of La Rue. It was a moment which might bring forth a tragedy. The tableau was itself a drama. La Rue stood as straight as his condition would let him, and returned the look of Cauthorne, who towered above him. A great silence had fallen in the grove. The two men seemed content, for a time, to stand and look at each other. Cauthorne's thoughts wandered

away to Lucie, to his hopes and his fears regarding her, to the strange barrier this horrible discovery was raising in his path. How could such a thing be surmounted? His great ability in providing expedients at the demand of sudden and unlooked-for emergencies, an ability which had made him a prince among war correspondents, seemed to have deserted him. He stood there dazed and bewildered. He could not quarrel with a pitiable cripple; he could not quarrel with the man he had maimed and ruined; he could not quarrel with Lucie's only brother. But what could he do? He could see very clearly why this man should look upon him as the cause of his life of misery, and feel like focusing years of morbid broodings in one hot moment of vengeance.

But La Rue showed no sign of any violent feeling. His look had more of introspection and hopeless resignation, than of anger and hate.

"If I had killed you," he said, as if half in soliloquy, "it might not have changed the result as to me. Men were being mangled every minute. I might have lost an eye or an ear the next volley."

"It makes me terribly wretched," said Cauthorne simply: "it is awful."

"Oh! don't speak that way," answered La Rue. "We were mere engines of slaughter then. All our better nature was in abeyance. We were acting under the pressure of a cataclysm. But now we are Christians, and love must flow in place of blood."

And then Cauthorne recalled, what he had known before, that La Rue was a Methodist clergyman, a preacher of great eloquence, whose whole sad life had emptied itself into the channel of revivalism.

Cauthorne grasped the sound hand of the rebel soldier, and looked at him in silence. He could command no better mode of expression. Tears sprang into his eyes, and his throat swelled with emotion.

"I think it would be well, sir, for us to keep sacred and secret this knowledge of ours," said La Rue: "it could do no good to burden others with it, and it might give rise to unpleasant comment."

Cauthorne tightened his grasp on the hand he was holding.

"You are right," he articulated with difficulty: "it ought to die with us."

The preacher lifted his eyes toward heaven, a sudden transport burning in them.

"Lord, forgive us as we forgive our enemies," he murmured.

There came a breeze leaping through the grove, loaded with coolness and fragrance, and from the distant fields wandered the plaintive songs of the freedmen trudging behind their ploughs. The great oaks shook their million leaves, and the dusky vines and the dark old fig-trees trembled and whispered. Gay-winged birds, a flock of paroquets, flew along under the lowest boughs. Some distance away Lucie and Willard strayed among the cool shadows, their lithe young forms outlined against the gray front of the old mansion.

"We never were enemies," said Cauthorne, his voice recovering all its sincerity and clearness. "It was not a personal struggle: it was a conflict in which our individualities were merged."

"Yes, yes," murmured La Rue.

If they found a sort of solace in such as-

sertion and admission, we ought not to grudge it. By some such argument nearly all the calamities consequent upon human methods of adjusting differences must be softened and absorbed. But the clear-cut truth remains, that, no matter how different it may be when peace has come, in the days of war, hate is the prevailing passion, and a burning, unquenchable desire to inflict quick and certain death flies with every bullet on a battle-field. It is well that the flexibility and elasticity of human nature is such that the rebound from the deadly passion which war engenders causes the best soldier to be, when peace blooms out of carnage, the first to frame excuses for clasping hands with his foe. And it is also well that very rarely the maimed wreck from the tempest of battle meets and recognizes the individual who wrought his irreparable misfortune.

Cauthorne and La Rue exchanged very few more words. They could find no ground upon which to base a conversation. By a tacit recognition of the hopelessness of the situation they separated, the stalwart Northerner going

thoughtfully towards the house, the shattered Southerner hobbling deeper into the gloom of the grove,—one to chafe and agonize over the fatality which had ordered this dark discovery ; the other to bend his gloomy eyes upon the life in the hereafter, where the crutch and the disfigurements of wounds are unknown, and where the dark mysteries of our earthly afflictions burst into the fragrant blooms of heavenly delights.

As Cauthorne strode on towards where Willard and Lucie were dallying under the moss-hung trees, his mind admitted a hundred reasons why he ought to treat as hopeless his new-born love for the beautiful Tallahassee girl. He could see no reason, in the first place, why he should expect her ever to love him ; and then this dark fact, which must be held secret, and her knowledge that he was engaged in the battle where four of her brothers fell, and where the fifth and only living one was disfigured, which would be forever coming up, seemed to him a barrier which it would be idle to attempt to pass.

He shook hands with Willard, and could not

refrain from twitting him about his short stay in the North. This was their first meeting since the latter's return.

"I tried manfully to stay away a respectable length of time," Willard said; "but I might just as well have tried to swim up the rapids of Niagara. By the way, what is keeping you? The legislature has adjourned, and"—

"I shall leave the city to-morrow," Cauthorne interrupted. "I am going down to reconnoitre the smoke of Wakulla."

"I had hoped to see you give up that adventure," said Lucie.

He looked almost eagerly at her. There were those sweet gray eyes overshadowed by the long lashes, the low, broad forehead, with the short locks straying over it, the drooping shoulders and full maidenly bust, the heavy black braids of hair, tied with scarlet bows, the loose, snow-white robe,—the embodiment of purity and beauty. His love for her took hold of him, and shook him as the reed is shaken by the wind. His purpose vanished. The great barrier between him and her was swept away in an instant.

Willard saw the strange, white light in his face; but Lucie was looking another way just then, and fanning herself with the wing of a snowy heron.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN THE OLD ROOM AGAIN.

WHEN Willard came back to the La Rue place, he walked right in, as if he had only been out for a turn in the afternoon air. He had come by the hack from Thomasville, and with his little brown leather travelling-bag in his hand was in the middle of the open hall when Lucie met him. He was handsomer than ever in his light, close-fitting suit of gray; and he smiled very frankly, and put out his hand for a welcome, having in his eyes a manly flash of joy.

"It's no use," he said, "I can't stay away.
Here I am."

Lucie was startled by such a sudden and unlooked-for apparition. She trembled a little; and her voice was not quite steady as she took his hand, and said,—

"I am glad you have come."

"It is ever so kind of you to say so. It relieves me of the terrible embarrassment of apology, when apology would be so insufficient," he replied, his eyes gathering the merest trace of sadness, and his voice shading into regret. "I have my punishment, I assure you."

He stood before her so erect, so evidently conscious of his ability to make generous amend for his fault, so confident of receiving cordial forgiveness, that she felt her embarrassment rapidly slipping away.

"Your room is just as you left it," she said. "It has been waiting for you."

"I have dreamed of it constantly," he replied with a swift smile. "I could not close my eyes without hearing the magnolia-bough brushing across the east window, and the mocking-birds twittering in the grove. But your aunt and your father, are they well?"

"Quite well, sir; and they will be real glad to see you. Papa was so surprised at your sudden leaving."

She stood holding one of her hands in the

other, with her head slightly turned to one side, and her long black lashes drooping over her eyes. Somewhere in her face,—about her mouth more than elsewhere,—there appeared a trace of sadness, or slight weariness, as if she recently had been thinking deeply.

"I did an unpardonable thing," he said, lightly shaking himself; "but I have repented, and done penance, and you have forgiven me. Let the dead past bury its dead. May I go to my room? I am tired and dusty with the all-day's drive."

"Yes. Supper will be called in a few minutes; and," she smilingly added, "there are strawberries and cream to be served."

He bowed, and was turning to go up stairs, when she said,—

"I heard of your brave and generous act in defence of Col. Vance, at Live Oak."

"That was nothing,—who told you?"

"A little bird," and they parted.

Once more in the prim, airy, old room, Willard took off his travel-clothes, and, having bathed, dressed himself with scrupulous care. This done, he clasped his hands behind him, and,

walking to and fro, indulged in a brown study. There was the old rustling of stiff magnolia-leaves at the window, the same sweet inflowing breeze, the mocking-birds everywhere singing, the blue sky, and sections of hill-notched horizon. He felt as though he had been a hundred years away, without the slightest change having come in his absence.

Miss Julie La Rue and the judge met him at the supper-table, quite as if he had never been away. He had never seen them more perfectly at ease or more entertaining.

Conversation at length turned to Vance's father's death, just announced by telegraph; and incidentally the successful labors of Cauthorne in behalf of Col. Vance's political plans were spoken of by the judge in terms of warmest praise.

"We have grown to respect Mr. Cauthorne very, very highly," the old man said: "he is a gentleman of most sterling character and abilities."

"I am glad you are finding him out," said Willard. "He is slow to get acquainted with; but he is full of all manner of kindness, good-

ness, strength, and worthiness. There are few such men."

"He is so interesting," added Lucie: "his life has been a string of such wonderful adventures."

"He takes wholesome views of things," said Miss Julie: "there's nothing light or trivial in him. His mind, like his body, is stout and substantial."

In a word, it was quite manifest to Willard that, during his foolish absence, Cauthorne had gained a strong lodgement in the regards of the La Rue household. It was an enviable achievement. Such a household could scarcely be found elsewhere.

Willard could not help noting and dwelling upon certain little evidences of a departure from the old customs in the arrangement of the supper-room. Green wire-screens had been hung in the windows and doors. A vase of snowy lilies stood in the centre of the old mahogany board. A pretty little bouquet lay beside each plate. The tea-set was the blue china of grandmother-days, and coolly gleamed in the place of the heavy silver. Lucie had

brought all this down from the dormer-windowed attic. The room looked as though a gentle breath of the latest art-whim had just blown through it. The walls had been papered,—a great concession,—and the woodwork had been revarnished. The negro girl who hovered about the backs of their chairs used her great brush of peacock-feathers perfunctorily, and to no purpose; for there was not a fly in the room. She added a picturesque Southern feature to the little scene, with her straight, lithe, undeveloped figure, her coal-black hands and face, her white cotton gown, and her round woolly head wrapped in a snowy kerchief.

It was with an intense satisfaction that Willard recognized his own fitness as a part of this group. He was a foreign element, he admitted, but a perfect foil to emphasize the unique beauties of his surroundings.

But Lucie,—he could not leave off studying her. Once, when the colored girl stood behind her waving the gorgeous feather-brush, he fancied her an Oriental queen in barbaric state, fanned by her favorite slave; but he rejected the fantasy almost instantly, seeing the gentle

Christian face, the gray, innocent eyes, the modest corsage, all rebuking his companion.

When supper was over, Judge La Rue took Willard's arm, and, requesting Lucie to fetch her guitar, took him out to the much-loved seats beneath the oaks.

The moon was well up the eastern sky, pouring a strong light slantwise across the grove; and, as is nearly always the case at night in Tallahassee, a gentle breeze was drawing from the north-west.

Lucie played a fandango, and afterwards sang two or three old familiar songs.

Willard listened to these, and to the garrulity of the old man, in a mood which permitted but slight appreciation of either. He was turning over in his mind the singular features of his intercourse with the La Rue household. It surprised him to recollect how meagre this intercourse had been, and especially strange seemed the tenuity of Lucie's part of it all. He could not remember any positive act of hers, barring the demand for the sketch; and it seemed to him now that his effect upon her

imagination must have been entirely negative from the first.

While they sat there a great clatter of hoofs and grinding of wheels interrupted one of the songs. Merry voices rose on the moonlit air.

"Oh, the excursionists!" cried Lucie: "they are from your city, sir."

Willard hated that recurring "sir" falling stiffly into the talk of everybody in the South.

"What excursionists?" he asked, coming away from his abstractions.

"It is Lucius Hatch and a party of Northerners from Jacksonville. I used to know Hatch's father. When I was in Washington in the year"—Judge La Rue went far enough to say.

Willard interrupted him.

"Lucius Hatch, did you say? He's a very dear friend of mine, superintendent of the Air Line Railway. Is *he* here?"

"Yes, sir: came over from Jacksonville this afternoon with some twenty-five or thirty others," said the judge.

As the foremost carriage came in sight, the

moonlight brought its occupants into bold relief against the foliage of the dark fig-orchard on the other side of the street, and Willard exclaimed,—

“Why, there’s Hatch now, and Miss Barnes and”—

“Mr. Cauthorne is with them,” said Lucie.

“What a racket they make!” said the judge: “they will alarm the city. They must be an ill—they must be a jolly set.”

“So they are, I should judge; but they are good people, the very best, or Hatch would not be with them,” said Willard.

“Nor Mr. Cauthorne,” said Lucie.

The long line of open vehicles drew past; and as each one entered the strong moonlight in front of the La Rue gateway, the stylish dresses and blonde faces of the women and girls, and the well-clothed, well-poised forms of the men, were very distinctly shown.

“They are like a flight of glad birds,” said Lucie: “they cannot contain their happiness.”

“It is the change of climate,” said Willard philosophically. “They have breathed a draught from the Fountain of Youth.”

"I should like that sort of life," rejoined Lucie. "It must be delightful to swing back and forth with the sun, keeping just on the line of springtime all the year."

It was lightly said, but the latent pathos of the wish coupled itself in Willard's mind with the great changes the war had wrought. Twenty years ago one of the La Rues would not have wished in vain for means to indulge every caprice of the imagination.

The merry troop went by with mirthful noises trailing after. It was like a taunt, as the voices struck against the old dull house, and rebounded into the moss-hung trees. Some negroes — those ubiquitous black familiars of the Southern night — slipped across the lawn to hang upon the fence and vacantly stare at the brilliant procession. It would have needed something more enlightening than moonshine to give them to understand the significance of their difference from the resplendent blue-robed blondes as they were trundled by.

But while Lucie was absorbed, quite as much as the quondam slaves, in watching the passing

party, Willard was wondering if he should ever be able to get any nearer to this witching girl. What was holding him away? Surely there never was a kinder, sweeter, simpler person. Why should not he say his say, and urge his cause without fear at the first opportunity?

Judge La Rue at length excused himself, and went into the house. The raid of the blondes was over. The last carriage had disappeared, the echoes of merry voices had entirely died away in the distance.

"Lucie," said Willard, standing in front of where she sat, "do you know why I came back?"

She looked up quickly as he spoke, and began to smile.

"You do not know; but I'm going to tell you now, and I wish you would listen very attentively," he went on.

"Isn't it late? What time is it?" she replied. She had a vague presentiment of what he was going to say.

"It is time for me to speak, and for you to hear," he said gently. "I have travelled a thousand miles, night and day, to come back

and tell you that I love you, that I cannot live without you, that my life, my love, and all that I am or ever can be, are yours forever."

She was white and speechless, even her lips losing their ruby brightness. She moved as if to get up, but he begged her not to go. He cast himself upon the seat close beside her, and poured a flood of eloquent prayer into her ear.

"Say you love me, Lucie, say you will be my wife, say I may be happier than man ever has been, speak to me — kiss me" —

She leaped away like a startled fawn. She had gone up the steps, and disappeared almost in the twinkling of an eye.

He picked up the guitar, and followed her; but he saw her no more that evening.

He walked up and down in his room, chafing as only a bewildered and baffled lover can. He tried to draw some sort of consolation from this or that little thing, as he conned over all that she had ever said or done in his presence. He sat in the window, and looked out upon the lovely moon-lit landscape, rimmed with dark-blue hills. He stretched forth his arms, and murmured the beloved name. He went and

kissed the flowers her hands had placed upon his table. He could not sleep, when he at last lay down. Brush, brush, brush, rustle, rustle, rustle, he heard the magnolia-bough blown across the many-mullioned window. He wondered if this was to be the end.

Next morning at breakfast Lucie was quite her usual self, showing no sign of remembering the little scene on the lawn, talking to Willard as if she had never heard him rave. She was inscrutable. He looked upon her with increased respect for her character as a well-balanced and perfectly self-poised young woman; and his passion, something disconnected from his judgment, grew apace, feeding and thriving upon what was intended to destroy it.

Coolly he bided his time, fully determined to never give over until from her own sweet lips should fall the decision of his fate in unequivocal terms.

But the time did not come. Something was always interfering. They sat together in the shade, they sang together in the grand parlor, they rode and drove together, she always, by

some pretty turn, avoiding every assault he planned, until finally Col. Vance returned, bringing the remains of his father, and a great public funeral took place, the whole population of Tallahassee following their honored and famous old fellow-citizen to his last resting-place in the shady cemetery on the hill.

CHAPTER XXII.

SKETCHES IN BLACK AND WHITE.

EX-GOV. VANCE had been an invalid, and out of the field of politics, for a number of years; but he had done much for his State, and much for the Tallahassee country, called Middle Florida. He was loved by the people as much for his personal worth as for his legal and political ability. Hence it came to pass, that when the telegram announcing his death was published, a meeting was called in Gallie's Hall to pass resolutions and to utter eulogies. Cauthorne went, and listened to the eloquent tributes with very strange feelings. Among other things, one speaker said,—

“But the grandest part of Gov. Vance’s long and active life was that embraced in the four years of the war. He was the bravest of the brave in the fore-front of battle for the Lost

Cause. He was a knight without fear and without reproach. I had the honor to be on his staff, and can testify that wherever the fight was fiercest, wherever the Yankee hordes were thickest, there was seen the tall form and white hair of our beloved old leader. He was a Southern patriot whose whole energies and whose every thought went into the struggle for our rights. It broke his heart when we were overpowered ; but he had the high courage to never acknowledge defeat, and I may be pardoned for saying here, that, if his health and powers of mind could have been preserved for us, we would not now be pandering to Northern sentiments, and harboring in our midst the emissaries of Yankee political organization."

Upon Cauthorne's ear such sentiments struck with the hateful ring of treason. But what affected him more was the fact that Judge La Rue, sitting as chairman of the meeting, nodded approval at the end of every sentence. He embraced the first opportunity of going out of the hall. It seemed so strange to hear such language publicly used, and to see it publicly recognized as fitting the occasion. But why

should he immediately fall to thinking of Lucie, and, in some remote way, connecting her with these Lost Cause orations?

A few days afterwards he saw a company of men, dressed in Confederate uniform, march in splendid order to meet the remains of Gov. Vance at the railway-station. It was a military funeral of the most impressive character, that followed later; but Cauthorne could not get rid of a guilty feeling while attending it. He felt in his heart that it would have been better if he had not given countenance, even by his reluctant presence, to a thing which had the appearance of nurturing the old sentiments of rebellion.

Hatch, with his party of excursionists, attended the funeral. The cemetery was a place worth seeing, and the solemnities of such a burial could not be passed by. All those gay dresses, scattered about under the huge live-oaks which shade the stuccoed vaults of the Tallahassee dead, added a curiously picturesque feature to the scene. The fair faces and yellow hair of the Northern girls, despite the nature of the occasion, attracted much attention from the soldierly youths of the military company. The

careless ease and grace of these girls, the fact that the question of dress was entirely out of their minds, and moreover the beautiful naturalness with which they connected themselves with the solemn affair, were sweetly impressive. Cauthorne found Willard disconsolately straying among the tombs on the outskirts of the crowd. The young man's face was in strict mourning gloominess, and his thoughts were evidently very far from pleasant. They nodded and passed each other by without a word.

The day was one of extreme loveliness, such as comes so frequently to that high, breeze-swept region. A cloudless blue sky, a rich sunshine tempered by a swelling wind from the Gulf, spicy fragrance, flower-perfumes, the washing sound in the leaves, the near horizon-line, the island-like look of the landscape, induced a sensation of blessed isolation commingled, in the minds of Cauthorne and Willard, with the sadness of exile. They wandered restlessly around wrapped in dreams of the far-off land and the elusive bowers of Love. Hatch could not account for their dry, irritable manner. He could not get them to talk.

The Tallahassee cemetery resembles Bonaventure at Savannah; but it is smaller, and is not so regularly set with trees. Wide-armed live-oaks and water-oaks make a pleasant gloom in the place. Many heavy-arched brick vaults, stuccoed with a grayish cement, are overrun with flowering vines; but there are few of those chilling white slabs and cenotaphs which disfigure our graveyards. Here and there a grave is surrounded with a thick stuccoed wall in the form of a rectangle filled in with blooming shrubs; many are marked with simple head and foot stones. Thrushes and mocking-birds sing in the grand treetops all day.

As Cauthorne slowly wandered about, he now and then came upon a striking picture. He noticed one young Northern girl, fifteen years old perhaps, sitting upon a low, flat tombstone, her blue dress spread wide, her hands carelessly embedded in her lap, her palmetto hat set far back, and her long, fair hair caught into a thick brush by a bright blue ribbon. She was a living, breathing statue of innocence. Only a few paces farther on, a negro girl of the same age, and also dressed in blue, was leaning against

the wall of a tomb. Her face was yellowish-black, vacant, horribly ugly. She held a little white child by the hand. Her head was bound up in a white napkin. The child was sweetly dressed, and showed its aristocratic blood in its small ears, delicate, high-arched feet, and straight, slender nose. There was an old Cracker man, queerly clad in seedy jeans, whose hat-crown ran up like a sugar-loaf, and whose trousers were drawn about his crooked legs like a second skin. He was standing with his feet far apart, his body bent forward, his chin thrust out, and his hands clasped behind him. He was chewing an enormous quid of dark tobacco.

A short hymn was sung at the grave by four or five good voices, and then some one began a prayer. Cauthorne turned, and saw Victor La Rue with upraised hands and heavenward-looking face. Those stubbed fingers thrilled him more than the cadenced tenderness of the prayer.

Beyond the preacher Lucie stood leaning on her father's arm. Willard had come up behind her, and stopped with his head uncovered and

his eyes downcast. A little to one side, and nearer the grave, Col. Vance stood very erect with folded arms.

When the ceremony was over, Willard joined Cauthorne, and went with him to the hotel. On their way they passed the hot, sandy market-square, with its two or three trees and its little trellised market-house. Some carts, whose oxen stood between the heavy shafts chewing their cud, while the negro owners lay sleeping in the sun, were grouped in one spot; in another, a pile of vegetables was wilting on a rude table. An enormously fat black woman sat in a door of the market-house smoking a pipe. The low-roofed lines of business buildings, which had been closed in token of respect for the dead statesman, were now being opened, and a few forlorn-looking Cracker women were waiting to get in to barter eggs for groceries or calico.

Knots of freedmen had gathered here and there at the street-corners; and Cauthorne, who had watched political matters closely, understood this to mean a meeting in the interest of the carpet-bagger. Later in the after-

noon the negroes poured into Tallahassee by every road, from far and near, walking, riding on mules, driving in those primitive ox-carts, coming any way, so as to get to the "rally," as they termed it.

At night the carpet-bagger, a corpulent middle-aged man, addressed the motley crowd in the street in front of the Capitol. His harangue was a tirade against the leading white politicians of the State, in which he shrewdly argued that unless the negroes rose in their might, and asserted their authority to rule by reason of their numbers, the yoke of slavery would again be fastened on their necks. "Think of it!" he cried, "here in Leon County you outnumber the whites as four to one! Nearly seventeen thousand of you, and only about four thousand of them, and yet every official is a white man! Here in Tallahassee you are two to their one. How does it come that the mayor and nearly all the city officers are white men? You are to blame. You are cowards, and you know you are, or you would turn out on election-days, and vote them out of office and out of sight. What are

you afraid of? You could trample your enemies under your feet. They wouldn't dare to chirp if you once said, 'Here, we are going to die fighting, or have our rights. The men of the North bled and died for our freedom, and we are not going to lose it now. Stand aside, for we are coming!' They'd stand aside, I tell you; and you colored men could reap the reward of freemen by taking possession of all these paying offices. You could get rich, you could be gentlemen, you could ride in your carriages. What are you going to do? It's a long time till another election. You'll have a chance to talk and colloque together. Make up your minds to be men. Meet these white bullies face to face, and, if needs be, pistol to pistol, gun to gun, knife to knife, and say to them, 'Beware! open the way to that ballot-box, or we will open a way through your infernal rebel bodies!'" A yell of savage approval greeted this part of the address, and the mottled throng swayed and jostled and gesticulated. But the scene changed very quickly. A compact body of armed white men, with the steady, regular tramp of well-drilled

soldiers at a sharp double-quick, swept around the outskirts of the dusky assembly. There was a loud order. The carpet-bagger got down from his improvised rostrum ; the crowd noiselessly and quickly dispersed. The law against riotous behavior in the streets had been enforced. The freedom of speech had been cut short. The intelligent co-operation of a few had been stronger than the ignorant confusion of the many. Brain had triumphed, even if it had resorted to a show of brute argument.

Willard had returned to La Rue place, and Cauthorne went out upon the now quiet and almost deserted streets. As he crossed the veranda he met Hatch, who said, with great indignation in his voice, —

“A deuced fine example of republican government, this !”

Cauthorne did not stop to argue the question. He flung back his reply as he walked on, —

“Oh ! that fool carpet-bagger ought to be shot as an insurrectionist and incendiary. He is either a lunatic, or a base, unscrupulous fraud upon his party.”

The moon was rising through a scattered

line of fleece clouds which flecked the eastern hill-broken horizon, and a strange stillness hovered in the air. Some plaintive sounds came from afar in several directions,—the voices of negroes singing camp-meeting songs, as they sought their distant cabin homes after their unsuccessful political venture. Once the words,—

“Praise de Lor’, praise de Lor’,
He’s de sinner’s frien’,
Praise de Lor’, praise de Lor’,
Sinners say amen!”

floating into Cauthorne’s ears, affected him powerfully.

He walked about in the streets, seeing only now and then a person. Many of the old business buildings had been turned into drinking and gambling dens. These were full of young men, most of them of good families. The vice of strong drink is greater in the South than all other vices taken together.

When he returned to the hotel, the excursionists were dancing in the parlor. From a funeral to a political row; from a political row past the

gambling hells to a dance! Surely here were contrasts strong enough for any purpose!

But the moon came up over beautiful, drowsy old Tallahassee, and flooded the gray roofs and dark groves with splendor. Little breezes alternated with calms; the mocking-birds stirred in their sleep, and dreamily sang in the leafy depths of the orchards. "The sweetest city in the world,—the home of the loveliest girl that ever lived!" Cauthorne murmured, and then he went to bed and dreamed of Lucie. He had not yet found time to digest the conditions being thrust upon him. To-morrow maybe, or at least very soon, he must take up all the threads of the situation, and decide for himself. Now he would sleep and dream.

CHAPTER XXIII.

VACILLATION.

WHEN Hatch and his excursionists had gone back to Jacksonville to prepare for their return to the North, Tallahassee was again left to its quietness, its sunshine, its shadows, its perfumes, its bird-songs, and its social dulness and languor. It was like a calm hot day, after a sennight of breezy coolness. It was like a picnic-ground after the festivities are over and the merry-makers have vanished.

Cauthorne had completed all the preliminary preparations for his reconnoissance of the so-called volcano; but he was lingering in the city from day to day, trying to convince himself, by some method of reasoning, that his duty was not so plain as it seemed. That he must give up all thought of Lucie La Rue, from a lover's standpoint, was a conclusion

towards which his judgment had irresistibly driven him. It was more terrible than any form of death; but it was also inexorable. Love—coming to him so late in life—had seized him with such power that its grip was felt in every fibre of his nature. His indomitable will, his finely-balanced and powerful judgment, his keen sense of duty, his high patriotism, and his peculiar notions of the perfect harmony of sentiment which ought to exist between lover and sweetheart, or husband and wife, were pitted against this pure and beautiful love for the Tallahassee girl; and all they could do was to keep in the strongest light before the lover's eyes the four dead brothers of Lucie on Chickamauga's bloody field, the mangled wreck of the living one, the sentiments of her people, the gray uniforms, the Lost Cause.

He did not take into consideration the rapid change taking place in the South, and the probability of the mutation soon beginning, if it had not already set in, in Tallahassee. To him, for the time, the little conservative city, and its surrounding hills and lakes, were the whole South; the stiff, aristocratic, unchanging

Tallahasseeans were the whole Southern people; that Lost-Cause eulogy was the sentiment of every one south of Mason and Dixon's line.

No doubt his love-trouble tended to exaggerate and accentuate his estimate of the meaning of such speeches as he had heard, and to emphasize the enormity of the guilt of those who uttered and those who indorsed them. The fact that the existence of such sentiments stood as a barrier between him and Lucie was of itself enough to imbitter him against the whole community for so long, at least, as his deeper-seated and more distracting cause of perplexity should exist with its present force.

But how could he abandon his hope of one day seeing his way clear to marrying Lucie and being inexpressibly happy? One's judgment may dictate, and one's conscience may thunder, and one's duty may beckon, and despair may be written on one's sky, and yet where there is love there will be hope.

Lucie grew more beautiful to his eyes and more dear to his heart every day; and, strange to say, he was every day more and more tempted

to cast himself at her feet, and acknowledge that it was he who had mangled and disfigured Victor at Chickamauga, and then to ask her to forgive him, as Victor had, and be his wife despite the complex horrors of the circumstances. He sometimes harbored the thought that possibly Lucie, having been a mere child during the war, had not become imbued with such bitterness towards the North as still rankled in the bosoms of older Southerners. But now and again he would turn fiercely away from all this to stare the naked facts in the face, acknowledging the utter wretchedness and hopelessness of his situation. And so, blown back and forth, he was tossed upon the waves of torment.

As he sat at his table in his room, late one evening, trying to fill out the last pages of a chapter of his novel, striving to find forgetfulness of his own troubles in picturing those of his hero, Col. Vance came in bearing in his hand a Savannah paper containing a full report of all the eulogies pronounced at the meeting in memory of his father.

“When will this twaddle about the Lost Cause cease among sensible men in the South?”

exclaimed the colonel, dropping into a chair. "It pains me beyond expression to see my father's friends perpetrating such mischievous platitudes in connection with their memorial meeting."

"I am glad to see you indignant," said Cauthorne; "but your indignation has no real value while it is only expressed in private. It is high time for you and all Southern men who acknowledge that there was really nothing in the Lost Cause but the perpetuity of slavery, to come out publicly and denounce every thing which tends to keep alive sectional hate."

"I know it is," replied Vance; "but the Northern politicians are forever harping on the war from their standpoint, and of course that keeps our people in no humor to tolerate any lessening of the spirit of resistance and retort."

"There is an easily appreciable difference," said Cauthorne, "between the spirit of a boastful patriot who has fought for his country and the rights of man, and the spirit of the defeated rebel who snarls because his slaves are freed, and his country is still undivided."

"Now *you* are bitter," said Vance, his face

reddening. "You ought to remember that defeat is annoying at best, and that utter abasement at the feet of an enemy is not American. I hold that we of the South have a perfect right to honor our dead soldiers as heroes, and to remember our victories as well as our defeats; but I am in favor of educating our people up to that patriotic self-sacrifice which can and will make them willing to forego mere talk for the sake of the whole country, and the future glory of our government."

"It never can be, so long as slavery is remembered with affection," rejoined Cauthorne.

"The secret does not lie there," said Vance. "You of the North forget that a small part comparatively of the Confederate soldiery were slave-owners. No, sir, the tender place in our people's hearts is where the dead are kept remembered, where our widows and orphans, our maimed soldiers"—

"Hold!" cried Cauthorne, suddenly interrupting him. "We are getting on forbidden ground. Let's not go farther. We should differ, and not be able to accomplish any good."

"So far as remembering slavery with affec-

tion is concerned, it is not true of our people," said Vance, giving no notice to Cauthorne's suggestion about dropping the subject. "We are glad slavery is ended; but we do not like being taunted as rebels for the rest of our days. The thing must end some time, and for one, I think there ought to be charity and forbearance on both sides; wherefore I say those speeches I have referred to were unwise."

"Well, well," said Cauthorne, "perhaps we don't differ so widely, after all. I confess that I am ready to see the 'Bloody Shirt' go out of politics." As he spoke he poured some wine, and pushed a glass to Vance. Then in an effort at a lighter manner he said, —

"In my novel here I am trying to exemplify the idea you advanced a while ago."

"What idea?"

"The idea that so long as the maimed and mutilated soldiers of the war live there can be no perfect union between the North and the South."

"You mistook me," said Vance quickly: "I did not intend to convey that impression. What I did mean was, that it wounded and

irritated our people to have Northern politicians all the time calling our dear dead ones, and our dear maimed and crippled living ones, rebels and traitors. We love our dead fathers and husbands, and our crippled brothers and sons, even if we are ready to repudiate the Lost Cause."

"Let the idea be mine, then," said Cau-thorne, actually hurrying to present his own experience under the cover of his novel. "The incident I attempt to portray in my story is the case of a young man from the North who falls in love with a Southern girl, and is on the point of proposing marriage to her when he chances to discover that her brother, who was terribly maimed and crippled in the war, is the same rebel soldier whom he shot on a certain battlefield, and that it was his bullets that had wrought the complete physical ruin of his sweetheart's only surviving male relative. I am making the case a strong one, for a purpose. I desire the story to have a mere touch of allegory in it. It is to raise the question between the North and the South: How are we to wed while the hideous reminders of our

struggle exist? I may not be able to draw the lines parallel, but you and every one can see the question presented in the picture. It is a question as hard to settle between the sections as between my supposed lovers. It is no more political in one instance than in the other. It is a grand moral proposition which must be considered, and its relations determined."

"Your lover," said Vance, "might easily settle the question by an appeal to his sweet-heart's womanhood and human passions; but the sections each have millions of mouths and millions of conflicting passions and interests. There is no parallel. Your young Northerner could go boldly up to the Southern girl, and say, 'I love you. It is true I shot your brother; but it was in battle, and without malice. It was the misfortune of war. I love you for your own self.' If she loved him she would kiss him, and go with him to the world's end, even if he had killed a dozen brothers."

Cauthorne rose, and walked back and forth. His brain was in a whirl, but he looked calm and walked steadily. Vance sat in a thoughtful attitude, little dreaming what application his

companion was making of his last expression. He rose presently, and went away in the bitterest mood of a vexed politician.

Cauthorne continued to walk back and forth in his room. Vance's sentence, "If she loved him she would kiss him, and go with him to the world's end, even if he had killed a dozen brothers," kept ringing in his ears. He imagined Lucie putting up her sweet mouth to kiss him, and to say, "I will go with you." His passion seemed to scorch and shrivel his face. Great wrinkles came in his cheeks and forehead.

"Heaven!" he muttered, "if it could be!" And the sound of his own voice startled him, it was so husky and broken.

He went and leaned out of the window, and let the coolness of the night fall upon his hot head. No thought of sleep came to him. The moon climbed over the zenith, and sank towards the west. The night began to wane. Gray streaks glimmered on the eastern horizon. Far and near the cocks crowed, and presently the birds over in the Capitol grounds awoke and sang.

"If she loved him she would kiss him, and go with him to the world's end," he repeated.

The first rays of the sun fell through the window; and, as if its fire had touched some combustible in his heart, his face lit up. "I will go and see her," he thought, "and she shall say whether she loves me. If she loves me she will kiss me, and go with me!"

All day he nursed his purpose, and in the cool of the afternoon he went to La Rue place. But Col. Vance and Lucie were just starting out to drive as he reached the gate. She looked so contented and happy there by the dark Southerner's side, that it almost maddened Cauthorne. He turned back, and the next morning he left for the swamp of Wakulla.

CHAPTER XXIV.

GOOD-BY.

AS April approached the Tallahassee country, and threatened to fetch the full fervor of a Floridian summer in mid-spring, Willard saw that his dallying days were numbered, and that he must go home. He was not satisfied with himself. He felt that in some way he had lately been falling far short of his usual success in every thing. His old self-complacency had deserted him, and he found himself fretfully grasping after some ill-defined and elusive explanation. He worried over impracticable matters. He would have liked to rectify Floridian social life. A thousand dull and hindering elements he would have eliminated. He would have made the people more communicative, more receptive, more progressive. There ought to be an art-school in Talla-

hassee, a grand hotel, and three or four more railways. The people ought to paint their houses and fences, and prune their shrubbery. The young men ought to think less of military drill and field-sports, and give their minds more to helping their country back to prosperity. When Lucie was out of his sight, he even found fault with her. She ought to be less enigmatical, and pay less attention to local restrictions. She ought to bloom out, and not always be a bud, not always be saying "sir" to a gentleman, not always be running away when one wished to say pretty things to her. He would have changed his relations with Vance, if he could have done so. He was exasperated at the Southerner's cold, high courtesy of manner towards him. He would rather be cut, or be a friend. In fact, things went all wrong with him, and he was all wrong with every thing. Of course he preserved to perfection his evenness and ease of deportment, his lightness of speech, his alertness, his ready smile, his graceful gestures; but a close observer would not have failed to discover a change in him.

Col. Vance's visits had increased in fre-

quency, till now they were as regular as the coming of the afternoon coolness. This of itself was a great strain on Willard's good nature; but the fact that Lucie seemed to be forgetting everybody but Vance tore up the fountains of his patience. He saw no remedy for this last evil; and so, with the sensation of turning himself adrift to float like a dry cork, he determined to go away.

In the morning he said to Judge La Rue, "I shall start North on the evening train. My time is up, I must go." He tried to speak lightly, and failed. His words fell heavily and almost ill-naturedly from his lips.

"I had hoped, sir," said the judge, "that you would stay a few days longer. I had a special reason for wishing you would."

"It is simply out of the question," replied Willard. "I have used up all the ozone of this region. I am needing a change. I am getting dyspeptic, or homesick, or something."

"You don't look ill, sir: you are the very picture of youthful health and spirits," said the Judge carelessly; then he knocked the ashes from his pipe, and, leaning towards the young

man, added in a confidential tone, "We are going to have a pleasant affair soon, and you'd better stay until it's over. You know what I mean."

"No," said Willard almost gruffly.

"Oh! I supposed you were aware of the approach of Lucie's wedding-day," rejoined the old man. "She and the Colonel are to be married within a fortnight. You must stay, and join in the merry-making. There is to be a swarm of guests and a grand time."

"And so it is to end in that way,—a big crowd, a little ceremony, a grand time, and then all that beauty and sweetness and freshness will be snuffed out like a candle!" cried Willard.

The old judge looked shrewdly at the young man, and said,—

"It is a most desirable union. It joins two of the oldest families of the State. Lucie will be the wife of the wealthiest and the most prominent young man in Florida."

Willard strove hard to repress what was rising in him. He tried to say something bright and appropriate; but he could think of

none of those clever turns of expression usually at his command. He sat there gazing blankly at the upper end of the little cane Lucie had given him.

"I am sorry you and Col. Vance don't get on well with each other," the judge added: "I had hoped your differences were settled, sir."

Willard smiled a dry, hard smile.

"Our chief difference," he said, "is one you do not seem to understand."

"Ah! I could not fairly understand, I admit; but I disliked asking you to tell me. I hope it is not irreparable, sir?"

Willard shook his head and bit his mustache. "I see no way to an adjustment," he said. "But all the burden comes on me. Vance has the upper hand." He was again trying to speak lightly. It was a dreary failure, but he went on: "I came a little too late to have a fair chance with him."

"Pardon, I don't just get your meaning," said the judge; but the truth was beginning to dawn upon his aged mind. "Your manner disturbs me, sir: I am wretchedly sorry if there's anything really serious at the bottom of this"—

"Did it never happen to enter your thought, that I might love Lucie?" exclaimed Willard, with the bullet-like directness of intense feeling. "Do I look like a blind, deaf, passionless, unimpressible stick? Don't you know that Lucie is the sweetest, beautifulest, most lovable girl in the whole world? Don't you know I have loved her from the first?" He paused a moment, and then changing his tone, added, "What did you think brought me back here?"

The old man's eyes were wide open. A color had leaped into his face. This discovery, albeit its suddenness was bewildering, opened a vista whose perspective was fascinating. As compared with Herman Willard, Col. Vance was a poor man. The dearest dream of Judge La Rue's declining life was to see Lucie restored to the wealth which had been her birthright. Strange that it had never before entered his mind—but it had; his sister had spoken of it long ago as something to be guarded against.

"I could have lifted her out of this dull life into the world of active pleasures, into a cultured sphere, into her true place, where she would have been the queen of all," Willard con-

tinued in the extravagance of his regret and disappointment.

"Well, well," said the judge, "I had not thought of such a thing. I am bewildered. I don't know what to say. Of course there's no remedy."

They were sitting on the broad veranda at the back of the house. They looked away, under the spreading boughs of the trees, to the wooded hills a mile north. The intervening fields shone hot and dry in the sunlight.

"Remedy, no remedy, of course there's no remedy," echoed Willard. "And if there was a remedy, who'd think of applying it? But then one feels all broken up with such a blow. I wish I'd never seen this little old unfortunate and misfortune-breeding city!" He smiled upon the judge in a way half petulant, half doleful. He got up, and went to the railing of the veranda, and leaned against it with one leg bent and the other stretched out. He rested his chin in the hollow of his hand. He whistled in a whisper. Presently he went on,—

"Oh! I shall be more reconciled when I get a long way off, where I can't see her, and where

her voice can't reach me. One will not feel this kind of thing always, do you think?"

The judge crossed his legs, tapped his pipe against his shoe, looked thoughtful and excited.

"You'd better not go this evening," he at length said: "there's no hurry, sir, is there?"

"Yes, a mighty hurry," exclaimed the young man. "I should go stark mad if I staid another day. Can't you see how I feel? Don't you understand? It's no boyish love I bear your daughter: I'm a man full grown, an intense and sincere man. I love with all my might; and it's no use trying, I can't stay and see her marry Vance. I can't see her marry any one but me. I feel that she ought to belong to me, that I ought to take her North as my wife and let her see what life really is, let her revel in all the delights and luxuries that wealth and society can give." He walked briskly back and forth with his head high, and his thin nostrils distended. "She's too sweet, and fresh, and beautiful to be forever paled in by the Tallahassee hills, and allowed to wither in the stagnant air of this dull town," he continued, whisking the

little cane, and thrusting out his well-turned chin. "I don't see how she ever can be happy with him and shut out from the world."

Judge La Rue sat there flushed and silent, his thoughts whirling through his brain in a crush of confliction. Lucie was his idol. Willard, without dreaming of such a thing, had aroused the old man's pet ambition in thus egotistically parading his ability to better that idol's condition.

"It is for her to choose," the judge said at last; "and a girl rarely looks ahead to calculate the chances of matrimony. Lucie is hardly a woman yet."

"I didn't want her to calculate the chances, it would be horrible," cried Willard, stopping, and actually glaring at Judge La Rue. "When a woman in love stops and calculates, she sinks to the level of a self-selling auctioneer. She seems to say, 'Here I am, going, going, going at half a million, who will say the million? It's too beastly mean for any thing!'"

"So it is, so it is!" exclaimed the old man, as though he found sudden relief in the idea. "A girl must make her own choice. Vance is

a fine man, sir, a fine man ; and his is a good family."

Willard had often heard this phrase, "a good family," skipping through the talk of such Tallahassee people as he had met; and whenever he had been able to trace it to its final meaning it was connected with the idea of owning many slaves "befo' the wa'," and of possessing broad estates of chocolate-colored cotton-land.

Lucie touched the grand piano in the parlor, idly at first, then she played a familiar prelude, and presently began singing, in the sweetest way imaginable, the ballad beginning, —

"Oh ! the Tallahassee girl is a charmer :
She sings like the mocking-bird in May."

She had no thought that Willard or any one was listening. Doubtless she was scarcely aware what she was singing. It was an unpremeditated burst of girlish music, as sincere and earnest as it was light and careless.

The old man and the youth looked at each other, and smiled, despite the perplexing nature of their interview.

"Yes," said Willard, — "a charmer and a sorceress. She sings like the sirens. There is nothing here but the bones of the victims she has lured to death. She has scorched the fields, and filled the air with deliriums!" He had at last succeeded in finding his old light manner and his old bantering tone of voice. He stood in an attitude of attention, his head a little to one side, his eyes half closed.

"One thing is plain," said the judge, arching his eyebrows : "*she's* in fine spirits, sir."

Willard actually laughed outright.

"Shall I go and deposit my adieu and congratulations together?" he asked ; and, without waiting for a response, he went through the hall into the parlor, leaving the old judge to his reflections and his tobacco.

Lucie had finished the song, and had turned half about on the piano-stool, with one forearm resting along the keys, the other slanting down across her lap. Her head drooped, and there was a pensive smile on her lips. She was a picture to distract and bewilder an artist, a girl to set a youth wild with love.

Willard stood still a moment in the door.

She looked up, and blushed to see him there, as if she were afraid he had heard her thoughts. The rosy blood shining through her cheeks gave her an extremely girlish, almost childish, look, for the few seconds that her face was turned towards him. She rose quickly, as if to go out of the room. He stepped in front of her, and said, in the airiest tones he could command,—

“Oh ! don’t run : I’m only going to say farewell, and leave you my best wishes for your married life, and all that. I’m not going to— to”—

She covered her face with her hands, but only for the merest point of time. Then she came bravely to him, and, putting one of the trembling hands in his, exclaimed,—

“You are not going to-day ?”

“Yes : my time is up.”

“Can’t you stay and see me— see me go ?” she faltered, smiling radiantly. “It would please us very much.”

That *us* had a sound which grated on every molecule in Willard’s body and soul. He let go her hand, as if it had given him an unbearable galvanic shock.

"I cannot," he said: "I must go at once. I am saying good-by. When I see you again — but no, I shall not see you again. I shall not come South any more."

"But I am coming North," she said quickly. "We are to spend July and August on Grand Traverse Bay, in Michigan. Do you ever go there? Is it a nice place?"

"Oh! a nice enough place; a cool, breezy, lost, lonely region," he replied. "In summer it is a good deal like what this is in winter. Shall you be at Petoskey?"

"I believe that is the place," she said.

"There's a Methodist camp-meeting there every summer, and lots of good fishing," he added.

"That will be ever so pleasant," she rejoined. "You know we are Methodists, and Col. Vance likes angling."

Willard looked at her with the feeling of one who sees all the value going out of his life. He felt every moment a rush of wild prayers struggling for utterance; but he talked lightly on, smothering his desperate passion.

When the hour for his departure arrived he

went. It was a very commonplace good-by. Judge La Rue insisted upon a promise of a visit the next winter; but Willard said he should go to Europe.

He shook hands with Lucie, and said, —

“While you are on Traverse Bay, go over to Northport, and stay a while. It will remind you of Tallahassee. Not that it looks like it; but it is so isolated, so sandy, and so — desolate.”

When he got into the carriage to be driven to the railway-station, he turned and took a long look at the old house. There was a breeze blowing, and he heard the magnolia-bough brushing against the window of his room.

CHAPTER XXV.

MR. JUMAS'S HOUSE.

WHOEVER goes to Tallahassee will hear of the mysterious smoke of Wakulla. It was first talked of in the early days when St. Mark's was just beginning to be known as a landing-place for Gulf-coast vessels. The sailors saw it, from far out on the water, a tall, slender column, now black like pitch-smoke, now gray like the smoke from burning leaves, and anon white like steam. Its apparent location is in the midst of a swamp, very little above tide-water, wherein grow every conceivable aquatic weed and grass and bush and tree,—a jungle a hundred-fold more difficult to penetrate than any in Africa or India.

Every newspaper *attaché* who happens to get into Middle Florida feels in duty bound to "write up" this smoky phenomenon, but

always at a distance, and mostly from hearsay evidence. He gets upon some high, windy hill near Tallahassee, and, looking south-east, sees, or, what is quite the same, imagines he sees, the lifting jet trembling against the sky, and he writes. He goes and sees Judge White, and writes more. He sees Col. Brevard, or Mayor Lewis, or Capt. Dyke, and adds some interesting particulars. He interviews an aged darky, who remembers "when de fus' house wus built in Tallahassee," and prolongs the account. For the rest he draws upon his ready imagination, or, if his imagination should chance to be slow to move, he whets it with a bottle of scuppernong.

The older inhabitants of Tallahassee may, if you are an intimate friend, tell you that once "The New York Herald" sent a man to explore the swamp, and explain the smoke of Wakulla. You will hear that this man got lost in the jungle, and came near dying, and saw wonderful things, and went away a wiser and silenter correspondent than was ever in that region before or since. You may get from Judge White — a genial and genuinely interesting

gentleman — some account of his own effort to reach the foot of that tall smoke-column ; how he floundered for miles through mud-slush, water, saw-grass, swamp-weeds, and bay-thickets, millions of mosquitoes, and legions of snakes, till, at last, he reached a tall pine on a tussock ; how he nailed cleats and climbed, and nailed cleats and climbed, up this tree, for a hundred feet or more, and, with a field-glass, looked at the smoke, still six miles distant ; and how his assistants all gave up and deserted him, and how the wild jungle was utterly impassable any farther, and how he came down from his tree, and floundered and splashed and swam and dragged and fought his way back to *terra firma*, sick, discouraged, but more than ever impressed with the strangeness of the smoke rising from that awful quagmire.

And it is no hoax, no illusion, no creation of a vivid Southern imagination. The smoke is there. It has been noted and commented on for nearly fifty years. It has been seen, almost constantly, from the north, the east, the south, and the west. Its location has been accurately determined by intelligent observations. It is a

permanent and persistent mystery. It is the greatest physical phenomenon in Florida. It is a standing temptation to inquisitive and adventuresome folk, — a constant taunt and banter which Nature flaunts in the faces of scientific explorers, and it offers the reward of fame for high achievement to whomsoever will solve its riddle.

It was, as has been said, first noticed by sailors on the Gulf coast, and by sponge-fishers; afterwards it came to be a source of considerable speculation by the early inhabitants of Leon and Wakulla counties. For a time it was believed that it was a sort of beacon or signal made by a band of smugglers or pirates, who had a rendezvous there. Some would explain it by supposing that runaway negroes had a camp in the swamp. During the war it was held to be a colony of deserters from the Confederate army. Since the war it has been dubbed a volcano. Such, in short, is the history of the Wakulla smoke.

Cauthorne, with a native colored guide, a pack-mule, a canvas boat, and, indeed, an outfit exactly suited to his purpose, went forth upon

his preliminary survey. It is not a part of this story to follow him step by step on his most extraordinary journey, nor could it be done if it were desired. He has maintained a reticence regarding his adventures, which nothing has induced him to cast aside. What is known is here given, gained mostly from the statements drawn from a family of negroes living on a tussock deep in the swamp of Wakulla, in whose cabin he lay for nine days sick of malarial fever. It seems that Cauthorne got lost, and that his guide, discovering the fact, stole the mule and deserted, making his way to Tampa, where he sold the animal for thirty-eight dollars, and embarked on a vessel bound for New Orleans. Thus abandoned, Cauthorne wandered about for days without food, and was at last seized with a fever which prostrated him. He was found in a state of delirium, by a negro girl who was hunting a lost cow. She ran for her father; and together they dragged, carried, and rolled Cauthorne to their cabin. He was very sick. They applied such simple remedies as they possessed, and nursed him with that kindness and tender care so characteristic of their

race. For several days he was unable to answer their questions, or indeed to speak intelligibly. He lay in the stupor of delirium, muttering disconnectedly and giving no heed to any thing they said to him. His bed was a heap of dried long-moss, his pillow was a roll of the same; sheet he had not; his cover was a nondescript patchwork of many bright-colored rags, very clean and very gay.

The owner of the cabin was a tall, strong man, black as Erebus, with a kindly face, and a great heap of grizzled wool on the top of his head. His household consisted of himself, his wife (very fat), and his daughter, three dogs and a mule; and his house was home, stable, and kennel all in one. His wife's name was Sooky, his daughter's Lucy. So it seemed very strange to these simple folks when Cauthorne would call out, "Lucie, Lucie!" in the midst of his moanings. Lucy would go to his bedside, and say, —

"Here I is, boss. What yo' want of me, boss?"

Then the sick man would thrash about with his arms, and mutter and murmur all sorts of

strange things, using words whose meaning was beyond the horizon of the poor colored girl's field of knowledge. Once he said (it was immediately after he had drank some cold, delicious spring water), as he turned his face to the wall,—

"Ah, good, sweet, beautiful Lucie!"

The negro maiden laughed, and showed her fine white teeth.

"Now jes' listen at de boss," she exclaimed.
"He dunno what he sayin'."

She sat by him for hours, and fanned him, and bathed his throbbing temples with cool water. She fetched gay flowers from the swamps, where the vines, the weeds, and the curious air-plants were all a-bloom, and festooned the little square window above his bed. She even put a necklace of these around her throat above the low-cut cotton slip which served her for a dress.

When Cauthorne at length came back to consciousness, he looked askance at every thing around him.

"Where am I?" he exclaimed in a voice made feeble by his long suffering.

"Here yo' is, boss, at Mr. Jumas's house," said Lucy, using the prefix "Mr." with true African pomposity.

"Mr. Jumas's house," muttered Cauthorne, and fell asleep.

By degrees, as the fever went away, he picked up in his waking intervals a knowledge of his condition and whereabouts. He began to eat the corn-cakes and the broiled birds prepared for him by Mrs. Sooky Jumas, and fed to him by Miss Lucy Jumas. Mr. Jordan Jumas sat by, and watched the proceedings. The two yellowish brindle dogs lay in a corner, and snapped their teeth at the flies.

The cabin was on a hummock island or tussock, in the midst of an awful swamp; but in one direction the view was fine. Through a slender rift in the wood, caused by a marshy swale, the eye caught a widening stretch of meadow or grass-swamp, beyond which, some five miles away, rolled the greenish-blue waters of the Gulf. The wind, sharp and sweet, blew in along this natural avenue, and poured through the little window upon Cauthorne. It acted as a stimulus and tonic. It was better

than wine or quinine. He convalesced rapidly.

It was a source of pleasure to him to watch the manœuvres of his black host and the women who nursed him. They were a revelation to him. The girl, especially, was an odd genius. All three of them were kind, extremely respectful, and very anxious to see him get well. Certain points of negro etiquette were scrupulously observed by them. One was, that their guest must eat first; another was, that they would not take a morsel of food in his presence, to avoid doing which they set their table out in the open air under a natural bower of spreading water-oaks. He often could hear them talking about him, and speculating as to where he came from, and who he was, and where he was going; but they never asked him a question, or appeared curious about him when they thought he was aware of their doings.

"He f'om de Norf," said Mr. Jumas, one night when he appeared to be asleep. "His lang'age don't soun' like Suddern gentlem's; an' den he say *Mister Jumas* to me, an' you know

de white folks down yar don't nebber say *Mister* to no cullud pusson."

"He's outdacious pooty," said Lucy; "an' his han's is ez little ez mine, do' he's a powerful big man, too."

"He sho'ly mus' be powerful rich," said Mrs. Sooky Jumas. "Dat gole watch an' dem fine cigars, dey don't 'long to no po' man, I tell yo' now dey don't."

"Well, it's none o' our business nothin' about him," added Mr. Jumas. "Jis' so we kin help 'im git well, an' sen' 'im 'long 'bout his natural business, same like udder folks, we's done our duty ez Christians. We don't need to know whedder he rich or po'; for 'tain't none ob our 'fairs 'bout dat."

"He's berry dark skinned," said Lucy Jumas; "but den I s'pose he's all white, do' I's seed whiter cullud pussons dan he is."

"Jes' lissen at de gal!" exclaimed Mr. Jumas. "Don't you see de ha'r? No cullud pusson ebber had sich ha'r ez dat."

"I seed a cullud young lady oncet," said Miss Lucy, "what could comb her ha'r jes' like a white pusson, an' it was long an' pooty

nigh red too. She lived over at Monticello. I seed her last camp-meetin'. She had a high red comb an' a yaller dress an' long gloves what had buttons on 'em, an' de bigges' gole breas'-pin. She wus quality gal, I tell you."

"De mos' 'spectablest cullud folks is dem what hab no white blood in 'em. I nebber see no yaller folks what didn't fink dey's too smart to be hones'," said Mr. Jumas. "Da'r was Gus' Bradley, he was pow'ful yaller, an' he got hung fo' stealin' an' sich. If yo's goin' to be cullud folks, w'y be cullud folks, an' ef yo's goin' to be white folks, w'y be white folks, dat's what I say. It allus seemed like a yaller nigger had got all de bad ob de white blood an' all de mean ob de nigger blood in 'im, an' no good f'om anywhar: dat's de way it looks to me."

Cauthorne was soon well enough to go. Mr. Jumas agreed to take him in his mule-cart to Oil Station on the Tallahassee and St. Marks Railway. Early one morning they set out, leaving the little cabin behind them just as the gray light of dawn began to flicker through the trees. The woman and the girl stood in

the low, wide doorway, and watched them out of sight.

Cauthorne felt a strange regret, or something akin to regret, in going away from these poor, kindly people. Their humanity and hospitality had been of the highest order, and their sense of politeness perfect. They had not even asked his name or place of residence.

When they reached the station, Cauthorne asked Jumas if there was any thing he needed about his little farm.

"Yah, sah," said the negro, taking off his hat, and rubbing his head: "ef I had a mule to match ole Ben dar, and a two-hoss wagon, den I could make my plantation jes' roll."

"How much would they cost, Mr. Jumas?"

"De mule cos' ninety dollar. De wagon cos' sixty dollar; dat make"— Jumas scratched his head again, and struggled with the addition; but it was too much for him. Cauthorne took out a blank-book, and wrote,—

"B. C. LEWIS & SONS, *Bankers, Tallahassee.*

"Pay to Mr. Jordon Jumas or order, the sum of one hundred and fifty dollars.

"LAWRENCE CAUTHORNE."

"When you go to Tallahassee, give that to the gentlemen at Lewis's Bank, and you'll get the money to buy your mule and wagon," said Cauthorne, handing the check to the astounded negro. The poor fellow would hardly take it; but Cauthorne explained and insisted, and finally had his way. Then Jumas was overjoyed. He did not say much, but his face worked, and his eyes shone with excitement.

This was all that could be found out about Cauthorne's trip to Wakulla.

The presentation of the check at Lewis's Bank was the cause of the inquiry and the explanation.

The only statements Cauthorne ever made were given to a detective whom he sent after his guide.

A long, unauthorized, and wholly fictitious account of the exploration was sent by some anonymous correspondent to a Western newspaper of wide circulation; but it created no sensation, and was never contradicted.

The smoke of Wakulla still lifts its slender column against the sky, and still defies all comers. The sailors see it, and say, "The Old

Man of the Swamp is smoking his pipe to-day." The negroes call it "De Debil's tar-kiln." The Crackers, "'low that mebbe hit's a passel of ole light'ud logs afire, or else a patch of this 'ere swamp mud what gits dry and burns." Its principal use seems to be, that it serves as a point towards which all visitors to Tallahassee may turn their eyes in wonderment, as towards a comet or a meteor, with the assurance that they know all that any one else knows about the mysterious phenomenon.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LUCIE.

MISS LUCIE LA RUE could not be justly measured by the common standard. The aunt who had taken the place of a mother to her, whilst she was a woman of excellent qualities of heart and mind, was a maiden whose views of matrimonial affairs had been unfavorably colored by disappointment, and whose social character was monumental. Judge La Rue, with the loss of his slaves, and the falling to pieces of his great estate, had let go much of his desire and also much of his ability to maintain his old social leadership, even while struggling hard to keep up appearances for political purposes. Of course, therefore, Lucie's domestic education had been obtained without any of those brightening and cheering auxiliary influences caught from con-

tact with progressive, liberal-minded companions in the home circle. In fact, she had been reared, to her present state of development, in an atmosphere of social decay, as plainly visible as if it had been painted on a canvas representing the crumbling homes of her native city. She had come up like a flower among old mossy stones, finding in some way enough soil to furnish the means of growing strong and sweet and beautiful, and of gathering a fragrance entirely unique: but the bloom was single; there was no raceme. It was as though she saw a little hand-breadth of blue, instead of the sky; a hilly periphery only four or five miles distant, instead of the vast horizon of the earth we inhabit. But mere isolation was not all, nor was it the strongest factor among the forces that had influenced her life. She was of the generation whose memory could recall the romantic days of slavery but vaguely, and upon whose childhood the war had made an effect like that of hearing thunder and the roar of a passing cyclone in one's sleep. Naturally she was buoyant, elastic, quick to receive impressions, and hungry for knowledge.

She had formed certain correct notions of life outside the little sphere in which she moved; but all the talk and the teachings of those to whom she looked for guidance were of a retrospective sort, delivered in the light of what had been, and what now existed, but from which every gleam of any future of change and progress was shut away. She was trained to understand that the glory of the South was gone forever, that despots and vandals had swept over it with fire and sword, in the ruthlessness of mere desire for plunder and power, and left it with nothing but its ashes, its broken institutions, its poverty, and its grand past. Of course this sitting with the back to the future and the face to the past is almost the normal state of age and debility. The old and debilitated leaders of Southern life were all Jeremiahs. They wailed. But the new leaders, or would-be leaders, were putting on a show of energy and enterprise. They were calling to the young men and women to rally around the standard of reform and progress. Not much success followed this move, however. The old lords and ladies of the land stood together for utter conservatism.

Against the constantly narrowing tyranny of customs and manners that had outlived the social *régime* under which they arose, the youthful part of the *élite* of Tallahassee could, of course, muster but a very weak rebellion. Grandmothers and mothers clung on to the moss-grown and decaying landmarks; grandfathers and fathers had little means with which to institute even the slight reforms their changed agricultural, commercial, and professional situation demanded. In a climate where decay begins at once and goes on rapidly, a few years of unavoidable neglect had worked a physical change that made the country look centuries old; and the people had unwittingly assimilated their bearing to this apparent antiquity of their houses, fences, streets, and fields. To be sure, with the imitative and ambitious impulse of youth, the new generation had caught from the great outside world a touch of the current fashions in dress and deportment; but it was a touch and nothing more. The stiff grandeur of a vanished time overshadowed them, and its spirit was their hereditament: it looked out of their eyes, it

was expressed in their walk; their high-held heads and haughty faces emphasized it. This condition of things was prevalent, after the close of the war, all over the South, for a time; but it has not even now changed, in the slightest degree, where there has been no considerable influx of Northern or foreign people. In other words, wherever the old generation of Southerners rule the South, the old order of things, social, domestic, and political, prevails. Slavery exists without the slaves; masters sit on decaying verandas with no one to do their bidding; planters lean against rickety fences, and look proudly over into overgrown fields where the negroes used to work and sing; cavaliers, in patched boots armed with big brass spurs, and wearing dilapidated sombreros, go clattering along on badly groomed steeds. The war has changed every thing but the people: they never can be changed until death has claimed the old generation, and counter-tides of migration and immigration have done their perfect work on the new. But there was a local and special influence of ultra Southernism at Tallahassee which was not touched by the

war. The city was a State capital of diminutive size, and of no importance as a military point: hence it stood intact when peace was declared. Every physical feature of its *ante-bellum* glory was preserved; and on this account the old, haughty, exclusive bearing of its people was easily and naturally retained. It had but one railroad coming in from the outside world, and this by a route so roundabout that the very cars looked stale; it had a negro postmaster, a constant source of vexation to the leading citizens, and its mails were as uncertain as its orange-crop. Its newspapers were ably and honorably conducted, but they affected the reader like a dream of last century. The billiard-tables in the City Hotel were of the kind one wonderingly looked at when one was a boy. But all this made Tallahassee charming. One likes old, dreamy, conservative, tree-shaded cities. One goes there to rest and doze, and sketch and write. It feeds the imagination. But what effect would such an environment produce in the case of a susceptible, healthy, perfectly balanced woman's nature, developed from childhood to maturity

within its influence? In a word, how could Lucie La Rue, whose life had dawned, expanded, and reached its present stage of womanly dimensions, within this circle of isolated conservatism, be measured by the same standard as that by which we measure those girls who from infancy are kept in the full light of the most advanced means of culture? And yet the very narrowness of her experience seemed to have perfected in her that freshness, that subtle innocence, that flower-like purity, so rare and so captivating to the best elements of manhood; and the monumental conservatism which surrounded her, as with a wall, had preserved to her the very peach-down of girlish sweetness. It had also kept out of her way, until recently when Willard and Cauthorne came, all the young men who would be likely to woo her, save those belonging to the old first families of Tallahassee and affected by the same influences as herself. No doubt she had had her girlish dreams of the grand and beautiful man who some day would come into her little world from the great universe outside, and claim her

as the errant knights and kings claimed their brides of old; but she had allowed Vance to approach closer and closer until they were engaged. She loved him as a good girl is apt to love a worthy man who courts her assiduously and discreetly on the threshold of her womanhood, with a love which often brings great married happiness, the unimpassioned love which is more like tender reverence and unbounded respect and admiration than like that hot frenzy of which the poets sing. Yet it was love of the purest and sweetest sort,—a love which will last after the sordid dregs of a burned-out passion lie like poison in the hollow of the heart.

The coming of Willard and Cauthorne into her sphere had acted as a disturbing force whose very dangers, being hidden as such from her consciousness, were beautifully fascinating. A change came into her life, and her dreams took on new colors. Willard, with his stories of art-life, and his sketchy way of delineating the scenes of grand society, his facile flattery and ready flexibility, his sudden bursts of sentiment, and withal his frankness and gentle-

ness of manners, had been to her a messenger from a world she had greatly longed to see. When he was gone, and she realized that it was probably forever, she cried, hardly knowing why. It was as if a dear friend had died and gone to that other and far-away world. The old house seemed gloomier than ever before. She could scarcely quit sending cut flowers to his room ; and she never heard the magnolia-bough brushing across the window without thinking of him, and heaving a little quick sigh. It was such a sigh as a mere child might give to the memory of a playfellow it has left beyond the ocean. She would sing the songs he loved, and wonder where he was, with a sense of loneliness in her heart which she never before had felt. Somehow the little dull town looked smaller and duller than ever, and the hills dryer and more barren.

Her rides and drives with Col. Vance were delightful in every way, and the evening promenades with him up and down the avenue of oaks in front of La Rue place were all that the ravishing weather and the tender communications of her lover could make them : never-

theless she contemplated with maidenly shyness their approaching nuptials, and would have been glad to postpone the wedding for at least a year; but she had surrendered to the importunities of Col. Vance, and to the oft-repeated wishes of her father, and now the day was close at hand.

Victor La Rue, whose love for his sister made him quick to notice the slightest change in her manner, had lately observed something in Lucie's face which seemed to indicate mental disquiet. Her cheeks bore each a little flush not usually there, and her eyes were restless. Her mouth drooped a little, and even her frequent smiles could not entirely dispel a certain languor which hung about her lips.

One day, while sitting under his favorite tree on the back lawn, Victor called to Lucie to come and read to him. The book he handed to her was a volume of Paul Hayne's poems. She read aloud, in her musical way, three or four of those charmingly sweet and graceful lyrics that the Southern poet knows so well how to make; then she put aside the dainty volume with a quickly-drawn sigh.

"It is hard work for me to read : the air is not good, is it?" she said, leaning back and putting her hands behind her head.

"It is you, sister, and not the air," said Victor in reply : "you are not happy ; I know you are not. I've been watching you for two or three days, and you don't act like yourself. What is it, Lu?"

He always called her Lu when he felt particularly like petting her.

"Oh, nothing at all!" she exclaimed, taking down her hands, and beginning to stroke Victor's hair. "I'm just a little bit lazy, I guess."

"Now you are trying to hide it," he said gravely : "it isn't right to do that, Lu, and you know it isn't. You must tell me what is troubling you."

"But when I don't know, myself, how can I?" she replied. "It's nothing, in fact."

"Sister," said Victor almost sternly, "you have been secretly suffering for several days, and I have been indulging many fears for your happiness. Will you answer me one easy question?"

She looked at her brother quickly, and without hesitation replied,—

“Yes, to be sure,” and laughed very lightly and naturally. “I’ve no secrets, Victor.”

“If you have no secrets, I don’t care to ask any questions,” he rejoined; “but I was going to put a very strange one.”

“Ask it,” she exclaimed, still smiling: “I’ll answer it that quick,” snapping her fingers in a playful way.

“You are too anxious,” he responded. “I was mistaken, I guess.”

Two gay-winged birds fell fighting through the air to the ground near by, and continued their battle there, rolling and pecking and fluttering noisily.

“War, war,” exclaimed Victor, gazing at the struggling combatants. “Maim each other, if you can, poor little wretches !”

Lucie rose and went towards the birds. She had nearly reached them when they separated, and flew away in opposite directions, leaving on the ground a single bright feather. She stooped and picked this up.

“It was a mimic fight,” she exclaimed: “the

blood is only a red breast-feather! I will wear this for the sake of the little knight who wrenched it from his antagonist." She fastened the scarlet trophy at her throat, where it shone like some flower-petal accidentally caught there.

Returning to her place beside her brother, she hummed a snatch from an old song, and gazed abstractedly up into the tree-tops.

Victor watched her in silence. Presently she said,—

"It is time for Mr. Cauthorne to return, I should think."

Victor moved uneasily in his seat at the sound of that name. He had been unwell lately, and inclined to brood over his misfortunes. His leg had pained him, and his crutches chafed him. His face had grown more sallow.

"Is there any danger down in the Wakulla country, Victor?" Lucy added after a while.

"I don't know," he answered: "they are mostly negroes who live there, harmless I should judge. There may be some dangerous characters, however,—fellows who would kill a man for his watch."

"I wish he hadn't gone. It is a profitless undertaking," she resumed, toying with one of Victor's crutches, and sighing again.

"Oh! if he wishes to go wallowing around in those malarious swamps until he takes fever, and dies, or till he's killed and robbed by negroes, it's his own fault," exclaimed Victor petulantly: "he wouldn't hear advice."

A sudden pallor went over Lucie's face. She looked into her brother's eyes, and then allowed her glance to wander restlessly from object to object.

Victor saw it all, and there came into his mind a half-formed suspicion. He contracted his brows, and pondered.

"He has been gone more than two weeks," said Lucie after a long silence. "We ought at least to have heard from him: it's only twenty-eight miles away."

"Oh! he'd likely not think of us any more after he was gone. He may be in New York by this time. He could take a steamer at St. Mark's, I suppose." Victor said this very deliberately, meanwhile closely watching his sister's face.

She looked troubled, and moved restlessly. His suspicions took deeper root, and clearer outlines. With a sort of hysterical promptness he decided upon his course.

"Lucie," he said, "are you going to be very happy after you're married?"

She came back from her painful thoughts of Cauthorne, with a blush and a smile; but the worried look lingered in her eyes.

"Yes, brother," she replied: "Arthur and I will be the happiest couple on earth; don't you think we will?"

She turned her eyes away from his intense and searching gaze.

"Lu," he said, "I want you to be happy. I pray God you may never see any sorrow. You are the only one of us left to be happy. Father is getting old, and I am"—

"Dear brother," she exclaimed, putting an arm around his neck, and kissing his forehead.

"I must tell you a strange thing," he said, "a very strange thing, which it would be a sin to keep from you any longer." He hesitated a moment, and then went on, "You know I have

always said that if I should ever meet the man who shot me at Chickamauga, I could not fail to recognize him. Well, I have found him."

She started back from him. With her hands upon his shoulders she gazed into his face. That mysterious power, which belongs exclusively to woman, was at work. She was reading the rest of the story in his eyes.

He waited for her to question him, or signify a desire to know more; but she sat there motionless, voiceless, looking into his very thoughts, as it seemed.

"I am sorry I ever found him," he at last added: "it has made me doubly wretched."

"You won't do any thing bad, Victor?" she said in a low, tremulous voice.

"No," he replied, "no, there is evil enough done already. Can you imagine who he is?"

She did not answer. She took her hands from his shoulders, and let them fall upon her lap.

"Cauthorne," he said in a husky voice.

Lucie remained silent. There was such confusion of thoughts in her mind, that all was blurred and indistinct.

A foot-fall sounded near, and looking up they saw Col. Vance standing before them. He was regarding Lucie with a quiet, happy smile in his fine dark eyes. She sprang up to meet him, and arm in arm they strolled away among the trees.

The breeze rippled over them, and whispered to them, the long moss waved its pale green banners, the flowers gleamed at their feet, and sent up perfume, the leaves rustled, and the birds sang wildly well. The sky was a blessing, and the earth a comfort. The blue, dreamy line of hills that notched the horizon shut out from them all the evil of the great outside world. Their murmuring voices, so in accord with nature's tones, were blown among the leaves and flowers, across the sunshine and the shade, till they could not be distinguished from the drowsy hum of the insects.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE SILVER BELL.

WHEN Cauthorne, after parting with Mr. Jumas, got on the railway-train at Oil Station, he went into the rear car, and sat down by Hollister, the master-mechanic of the road, who chanced to be aboard. He had forgotten how unkempt he must look, and how haggard and wan, after his sickness and his protracted absence from tonsorial influences.

Hollister did not recognize him readily: he had to take a second and a third look.

"Why, Mr. Cauthorne!" he exclaimed at last, "what *is* the matter with you?"

"I've been hunting big game down in the Wakulla swamps," replied Cauthorne; "have had a brush of malarial fever. Nothing serious. How is Tallahassee?"

"Oh, dull! nothing doing," said the me-

chanic, still eying him quizzically. " You look fearful bad, sir, fearful bad. You must 'a' had a considerable tussle. No, there's nothing doing in Tallahassee, there's never any thing doing there. Now it's different in North Carolina where I came from. Up at Raleigh there's always something doing. I was master of a road up there before I came here about a year ago, and I tell you it's different. The folks up there are not above working for a living, and the best families don't avoid being sociable with a fellow because he's poor and didn't own slaves before the war."

" How do you account for the general dilapidation of Tallahassee and its surrounding country, Hollister? The land is very rich, and produce brings large prices." Cauthorne asked this question more from his habit as a correspondent than from any real desire to get the kindly mechanic's views. His thoughts were far away from the proposed subject, in fact, and it was as if from a great distance that he heard what came by way of response.

" Oh ! it's mighty easy to see what ails Tallahassee," said Hollister : " its people can't realize

that there's been a war, and the niggers are freed, and it takes work to make money, and land is of no value without intelligent work being done on it, and all that sort of thing. Why, these old fellows that own all the land around Tallahassee actually imagine that they're rich, and highfalutin, and buncomb, like they used to be. They don't admit that a church mouse is corpulent by the side of 'em, but it's a Lord's truth all the same. One thing bothers me when I think about 'em: it's what they're going to do when their carriages and things that they had left over after the war all wear out. How are they going to top it over honest poor folks then? You may just set it down that they can't buy new ones any more. That's played out. I don't pity 'em much, they're so everlasting high-headed. Now, if they'd just go at it, and put intelligence to work on their plantations, and raise more corn and oats, and less cotton, and buy fertilizers, and treat their lands decent, they'd get along fine. But they don't think of but two things,—politics, and keeping up appearances. A man'll keep a carriage and a white-hatted driver, and take his family to

church in the same old aristocratic way, when he's wearing the same old broadcloth coat he had before the war, though it shines like it had been pretty near rubbed through at the back and elbows. They'll never make any more money till they drop to the racket, and see things just as they are. Now, up in North Carolina, at Raleigh where I came from, the people have got down to fine grinding, so you might say, and they're pulling through all right. They've got some get-up-and-snap about 'em. You ought to go to North Carolina, sir, and see how they're rolling up."

"Hello, Hollister, giving another poor fellow a dose of North Carolina, eh?" shouted a big, fat man, coming up behind the mechanic, and slapping him on the shoulder. "If you want to dry Hollister up, sir," turning to Cauthorne, "just ask him for '*a chaw of rosum* ;' you know the Tar-heels use pine rosin to chew in place of tobacco. He'll quit talking rather than divide '*rosum*' with you!"

The fat man went on through to the smoking-car. Hollister laughed and said,—

"That's Conant: he's full of jokes. He always gets that one off on me."

"Are we nearing Tallahassee?" asked Cauthorne, rousing himself as if from a fit of absent-mindedness. In truth, he hadn't seen Conant, nor had he heard a word of what Hollister had been saying.

"Yes, sir, we're nearly there," was the reply: "yonder are the hills."

Cauthorne looked from the window across a stretch of wet, level sand, and saw with a thrill the first green billows of the Tallahassee region. It was like the sight of land after a long ocean-voyage. Something which since his departure had been in abeyance, now leaped up in him, and tugged at his heart and his brain. The harsh clacking of the car-wheels was turned into music. The breeze rushing in through the open window was heavy with perfume. He saw a house on a hill, and a fig-orchard clinging along the side of a bluff. The engine whistled. A colored boy put his head in the front doorway of the coach, and shouted in a sing-song way, "Tallahassee!"

If he had been an angel of joy, and had announced Eden, it would not have sounded half so sweetly in Cauthorne's ears.

There was a great crowd at the station; soldiers armed to the teeth,—gray-uniformed soldiers, grimly determined in face and manner, who were thronging on a special train ready to start eastward. Cauthorne heard something about a murder at Madison, or some other Middle-Florida town. A young lawyer and politician had been brutally killed by a negro at a court-house door, where the investigation-committee of alleged election frauds was taking evidence.

"I'm in favor of killing every nigger in the State," he heard a man say.

"No, no," said another. "Let's abide by law. Violence and bloodshed will be common enough, do the best we can."

"Law!" cried the other contemptuously. "That young man's death couldn't be avenged by hanging a thousand niggers. I say kill every last one of 'em. The sooner they're killed, the sooner we'll get white immigrants in their places. To steal and murder is all they're fit for."

Cauthorne thought of Mr. Jumas and his family, thus in his own mind refuting the man's sweeping assertion.

But the murder was a foul one, and the excitement was doubled on account of the political origin of the trouble out of which it had come.

At any other time Cauthorne would have lost not a moment in collecting all the information possible touching this affair; but now he climbed into John's carriage,—every one who has been to Tallahassee remembers John's carriage,—and asked to be driven to the City Hotel. What cared he for murders in neighboring towns? What cared he for this one-sided struggle between the races? Let them take the negro, and hang him, as he no doubt deserved to be hung; but as for himself, he had no interest in the matter. A sweet voice was calling him, little hands were beckoning to him; an old house among the trees, the rustic seat, a divinely beautiful form and face, a white dress, scarlet ribbons and flowers,—Lucie, Lucie, the Tallahassee girl,—these were his thoughts, these were his whole life.

He passed through the crowd gathered on the veranda of the hotel, and went at once to his room.

Through his windows, while he was preparing to go to the barber's apartments in the back of the building, he heard many threats from excited lips against the whole negro race.

"I wish dey wasn't no politics," said the barber gloomily. "Us cullud folks what wants to do right is gwine ter hab a powerful hard time on 'count ob de cullud fools what go in for office an' 'p'intments an' sich. I wish sich niggahs'd all go off Norf."

Cauthorne made no reply. It was none of his business. His mind was full of something else. The barber continued,—

"'Pears ter me de white folks is gof er better right ter run de gov'ment dan us darkies has, kase dey's more 'quainted wid de business. What 'd I know 'bout makin' laws? All I keers for is 'tection an' a fa'r fiel' fo' business in my line. De res' may fight ober de votes an' de counts an' de offices jes' as much as dey please."

Cauthorne went back to his room again. He did not care to see any one. There was a pile of letters to read. Some of them required answering. He never before had found labor so

hard, or his thoughts so little at his command, or his hand so unsteady.

When the sun was down, and the shadows of night began to gather in the streets, he got up from his writing, and took his hat and cane. He stood and hesitated, as of a sudden, for the first time since he had recovered consciousness from the delirium of fever, it darkly fell upon his mind that an impassable gulf lay between him and the happiness he sought. Victor La Rue, with his stubbed hand and leg, rose before him. Col. Vance rose before him. He drew his palm across his forehead. He pressed his fingers on his eyes. It was but a momentary faltering: no power of his could resist the influence which was drawing him. He had to go.

Once out in the street, he walked firmly and rapidly toward La Rue place, passing, without noting them, the objects grown so familiar to his eyes,—the market-house, the little brick church, the old place belonging to the Catholic sisters, the rows of giant live-oaks, the embowered mansions.

There was a new moon, thin and bright, hanging in the west, just above the scalloped

horizon, and the dark blue sky was full of stars.

He tramped along, swinging his cane, his eyes downcast. When he reached the La Rue gate it was open. A colored boy, standing near, took off his hat and bowed, saying, "Walk in, sah;" but Cauthorne did not notice him. A carriage had just passed in, and another was close behind him. There was a suppressed stir about the place. Servants were silently and swiftly flitting about as if some important domestic event required all their attention and effort.

Cauthorne passed on to the house; but as he neared the broad steps of the veranda he suddenly became aware that the rooms were filled with ladies and gentlemen. Everywhere shone brilliant lights, everywhere flowers, everywhere the rustle of dresses and the hum of voices.

He stopped at the flickering edge of the illuminated space around the mansion, and watched the forms flit to and fro in the hall and parlors.

By one of those cerebral tricks, as inexplicable as life itself, suddenly a curious old silver bell came into his mind. It was a rare, antique

piece of workmanship, which had been in the La Rue family for many generations. Lucie had shown it to him one day. "It is the family marriage-bell," she had said. "It brings a custom with it whose origin is lost as irrecoverably as is the bell-maker's name who wrought the curious old thing. Whenever a La Rue is married, the bell is hung in the wedding-room, in a circle of orange-flowers; and, as soon as the ceremony is over, it is rung. It has a sweet voice."

She shook it till its tender music seemed to fill the old house.

"We are a Huguenot family," she had continued, "and trace ourselves around to the south of France. Some time about the middle of the sixteenth century there is confusion in the line, and we are not certain; but the bell goes back by tradition, and the family marriage-custom with it. When I get married it will be the first time it has served its tinkling turn since papa was the happy man, nearly fifty-five years ago."

"I wonder if I couldn't get it to lift its voice at my nuptial feast?" Cauthorne had said.

"Oh! it never goes out of the family," Lucie had replied, with a little laugh far sweeter than the tones of the bell.

"I shouldn't wish it to," quickly he had rejoined; and then Lucie had put the bell away.

And now standing there, half in the light, half in the shade, Cauthorne recalled every minute feature of the little conversation.

He leaned heavily on his cane, and, pressing his hand on his forehead, muttered, —

"It is her wedding-night, — it is her wedding-night."

And the words, spoken scarcely above a whisper, seemed to reverberate as far as the winds could go. In his heart there was fire, — burning and consuming fire, — in his mouth was thirst, in his brain a crush and confusion coming on again with redoubled force.

How helpless a being is man when once Fate seizes him! How useless his powerful limbs, his cunning, sinewy hands, his active brain! He must stand and see Destiny work out for him the immitigable evil, without so much as offering resistance. What can you do when

death falls upon your dearest one? Nothing. What can you do when calamity sweeps away your fortune? Nothing. What can you do when the tongue of slander and the accidental conjunction of circumstances ruin your character? Nothing. What can you do when she whom you love more than life, or fortune, or character, turns away her face and loves another? Nothing. Oh, yes! says the philosopher,— taking his pipe or his cigar from his lips,— oh, yes! you can do something. You can rise superior to Fate. You can fling sorrow and despair to the winds. You can take up a new thread of life. You can shake off your gloom, and go where the sun shines,—you can do whatever you will to do. Shake off this passion? Shake off this strange despair,—this aching regret? How? You cannot quit smoking, oh vain boaster! You cling to your cigar, or your pipe, knowing that you are being slowly but surely poisoned to death; and yet you say, “It is preposterous for a great strong man to be overcome by his love for a girl!” You toss aside the silly story of a consuming passion, and relight the stub of a half-burned *maduro*.

You have never seen your Lucie La Rue. You have never stood on the shadowy line, between light and darkness, listening for the tinkle of the old sweet marriage-bell. You have never felt the cool dew gather on your face in the soft Southern night, as the wind palpitated in the old trees, and the mocking-birds stirred tunefully in their slumbers; nor the weight of the whole far-spreading night settle down upon your heart, as a sudden silence, falling on the gay guests within the mansion of your love, announced the beginning of the sweet and bitter ceremony which locked her away from you forever.

Once Cauthorne chanced to glance up at a window: it was Willard's favorite window, and there, framed for an instant like the picture of some heavenly spirit, robed in white, veil-covered, crowned with orange-flowers, stood Lucie. The magnolia-bough, yielding to the wind-current, passed a spray across her, like a cloud across the southern moon. And then she vanished.

The old-time colored folk of the household came from their dilapidated quarters, and stood

where they could see into the house through the wide-open windows and doors.

Cauthorne heard Auntie Liza's voice. She was saying that "De ceremony's 'bout ter begin. Keep yo'sel's quiet, now, chillen, an' lissen." They all stood like black statues cut out of night itself. "Dar dey is! dar dey is," whispered the old woman. "Bress de sweet chile's soul! Don't she look bootiful! An' Mars' Vance too, Lor' bress 'm, Lor' bress 'm!"

Cauthorne looked, staggered, turned away, and would have left the place, but he was too weak. A little way in the wood he sat down at the root of a tree. Being removed to even this distance seemed to give him a calmer view. He drew in a great breath, and began to exert his strong will.

How long he had been there he could not have guessed, but he had heard the rustle and stir after the ceremony was over and the sweet silver bell had ceased its ringing; a long period of confused noises like murmurings and whisperings of happy people had followed this, and then there was joyful music, and the rhythmic beat of the dancers.

"Mr. Cauthorne," said the well-remembered, subdued voice of Victor La Rue, close beside him. He looked up and saw the outlines of the cripple leaning on his crutches. "I have been hunting for you everywhere," he continued. "Lucie said she saw you, but I could hardly believe it; I thought it probable that she had imagined it. I am glad you did not go in. It is best as it is. It could do no good."

Cauthorne vaguely wondered how Victor had got his knowledge, but he was still too overwhelmed to speak. Slowly and painfully the crippled man eased himself down until he sat upon the ground close by Cauthorne.

The music swelled higher and joyfuller; the feet of the dancers beat to quicker time.

"I know it is terrible," said Victor: "I know what it is to have one's life crushed at a single blow. But *I* have borne it; and *you* must bear it, sir, like a man and a Christian."

In a second Cauthorne was aflame with anger. He sprang to his feet and glared through the gloom at his companion.

"What are *you* here for?" he cried, his voice shaking hoarsely: "what do *you* come

into my way for? What do *I* care for *your* troubles, or *your* advice? Is there no way of escaping *you*? Do you mean to *always* come shaking your hurt hand and your maimed leg in my face?"

Victor was speechless with astonishment; and before he could recover himself Cauthorne had strode away into the shadowy boscage, leaving behind him the sting of his terrible words. But he came back in a minute or two, and put his hand upon the soldier's drooping head.

"Forgive my hot humor" he said; "forgive me as I forgive those who trespass against me. I am not myself to-night. It will all be right. You forgive me?"

"I love you," said Victor, grasping his hand and clinging to it tremulously: "there is nothing to forgive, sir."

"And here all ends," said Cauthorne, returning the pressure of the soldier's hand, and bending over him. "Here all ends. Good-by."

Victor heard his heavy footsteps, and knew that he was gone forever.

"Good-by, Lucie," he heard him murmur; and then the music and the dancing and the sough of the night-wind overwhelmed every other sound.

The reader will remember a picture which caused such a stir in Parisian art-circles last season. It was called "A Vision of Florida," and was done in the highest and most commendable style of the impressionist school. It was a young girl, dark-eyed, black-haired, brown-faced, lithe, innocent, clothed in white and dull scarlet, sitting on a rustic seat under a huge, moss-hung, live-oak tree. In the background there was a glimpse of an old gray mansion with a decaying veranda and a many-gabled roof. A mysterious charm hung about the picture, defying criticism and captivating the imagination. One tried in vain to analyze the feeling which crept over him as he contemplated that sweet, happy, half-languid, half-insistant face. It was somewhat the face of a beautiful child just aroused from gentle sleep and wonderful dreams. It half lingered with recollections of those dreams, it half inquired

about the present and the promise of the morrow. Such a face will haunt one, such a form will stay in one's memory and rob one of rest.

Lawrence Cauthorne chanced to come upon this picture at the exhibition, and at once—struck numb with a bolt of sorrow he had fancied dead—stood breathless before it. It was as if he stood on the lawn at La Rue place, with Lucie sitting in the old favorite seat before him. The feeling came and passed, like a hot, hurtful waft from some malarious place; and then he carefully examined the canvas, as one who is coldly critical. It was the work, as the reader already knows, of Herman Willard, jun. It has made him famous.

Cauthorne and Willard seldom meet now: they have, by a tacit consent, drifted away from each other.

Once they had a little talk in which they mutually confessed the foolishness of nursing the Tallahassee memory.

"We really missed getting inside of that strange little world, after all," said Willard, toy-ing with a cigarette.

"I got too far in for my peace of mind, I fear," replied Cauthorne.

"Why should it affect one's peace of mind?" demanded Willard. "We dropped in there like strange beings from another planet. She looked curiously and inquiringly at us; she enjoyed us as somewhat new and interesting; but she loved Vance before she ever saw us, and she was, like a true, sweet woman the world over, faithful and loyal to her lord. The thing has its touch of pathos, its pang, its irony; but it also has the dewy freshness, and tenderness, and joyfulness of the old, old story. It ended in a happy marriage. What could be added? Is it not a perfectly rounded poem?"

"Your draught of philosophy is very clear and tempting," said Cauthorne, smiling as one who would rather not, "but one is not satisfied with it. It does not quench one's thirst."

"Oh, well! I don't know," added Willard: "I find much consolation in such philosophy. I am"—

"A sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal," interrupted Cauthorne.

"Perhaps you are right," Willard responded.

"In my dreams I often hear those magnolia sprays rustling across the window of the old room at the La Rue place, and life seems a little hollow bubble when I wake."

"There is one consolation," said Cauthorne, more in soliloquy than addressed to his companion. "She is happy. Whenever I contemplate what a horror it would have been if our going there had involved her in sorrow, I thank Heaven fervently that her sweet life is rounded into the ripeness of love."

"You said just a moment ago that my philosophy is insipid, now you regale yourself with it," said Willard half laughing.

"It is tasteless and unsatisfactory," exclaimed Cauthorne, "but, you know, it might have been bitter, burning, deadly, to her as well as to me."

"And to me," added Willard.

They looked at each other. Their eyes were full of visions; their ears were full of tender sounds.

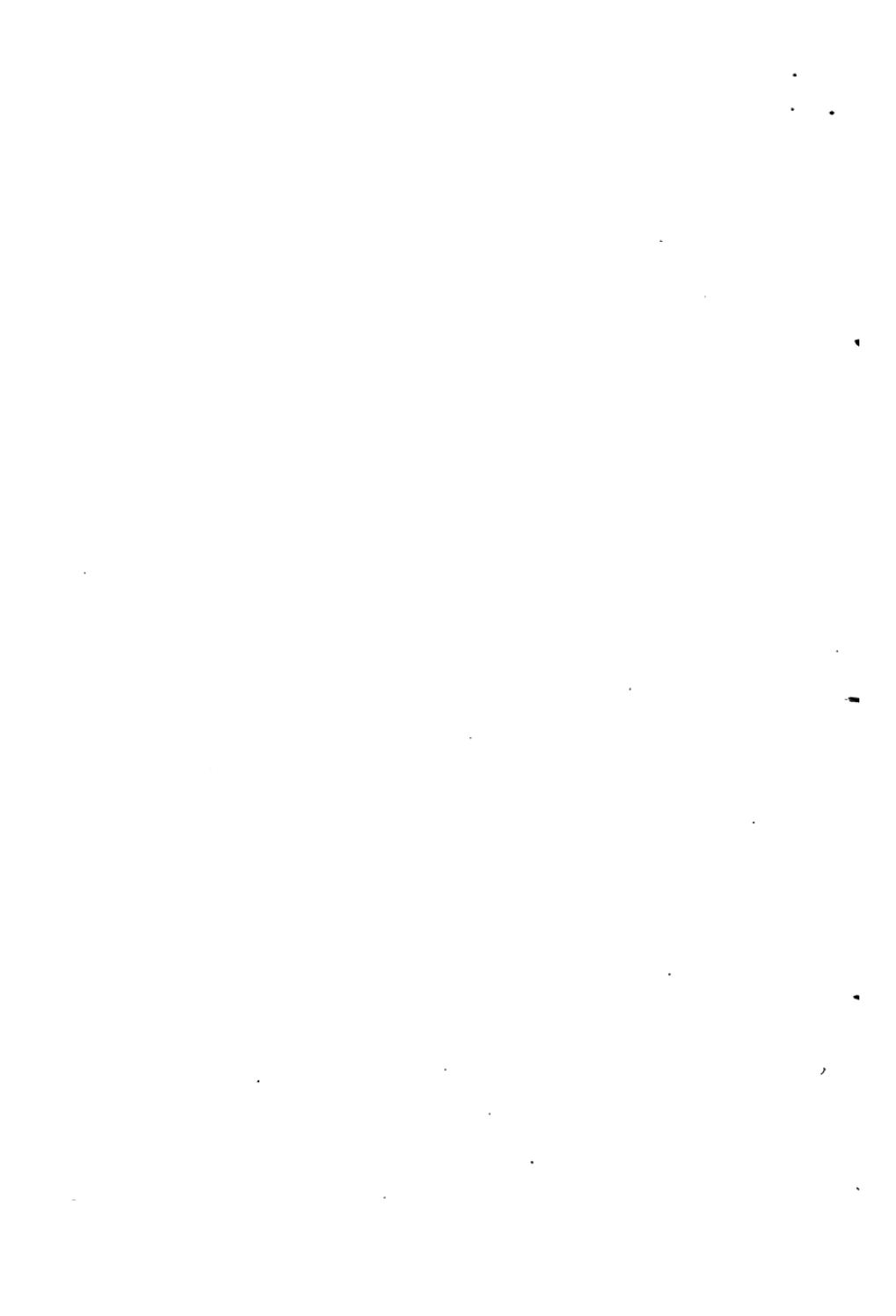
"Let us drop this subject forever," said Cauthorne, going to a window and leaning out so that the breeze from the blue sea below might fan him.

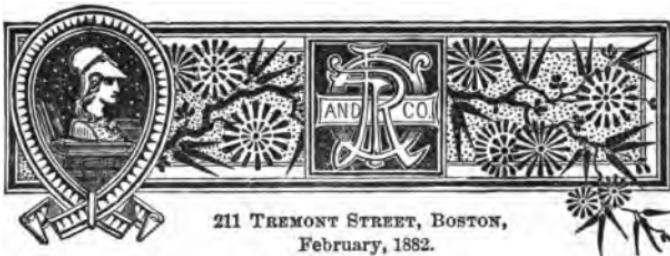
"It would be well," assented Willard.

The day was scarcely begun, but the brisk breath had blown away the mists. The white-capped waves rolled free and far. Some sails were in sight, slanting down the wind, and some white gulls, far out, kept flickering farther and farther, like those that Edgar Fawcett saw

"Gleam as a blossom's petals
Blown through the spacious morn."

THE END.





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